



Second Edition

GUIDE TO THE STRING QUARTET LITERATURE

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A Guide to the String Quartet Literature

By Raymond Silvertrust

Introduction and Preface

First, I would like to apologize to my readers. I have hastily typed this entirely myself. And as I have no editor and because I am not a good proof reader, you will find many mistakes, largely because I have felt, now in my seventh decade, that I am racing against the clock so to speak. I have wanted to make sure that I would be able to complete this guide. When it is done, and if I have time, I will improve it, add to it and, of course, try to eliminate all of the errors I have left behind.

This is the seventh and penultimate in my series of chamber music guides and the most daunting as the literature for string quartet is the most copious in the genre of chamber music. The main objective of this guide, as with my others, is to provide both professional and amateur chamber music players, as well as concertgoers, with a practical guide to the string quartet literature. But it is a special type of guide which up until now has not existed in English; a guide which can be used as an aid to help explore the wider world of chamber music, most of which in my experience, is virtually unknown to professional musicians as well as the listening public. However, this guide is by no means a mere compilation or an encyclopaedia of works, nor is it an academic treatise which analyses how a composer actually wrote his music.

It is unfortunate that today's concert-goer is presented with the same works over and over again. As far as chamber music concerts go, most of them are by string quartet ensembles. This being the case, there is, in my opinion, no excuse for presenting the same few works over and over again in concert, while ignoring literally hundreds of first class quartets that deserve to be heard. The typical quartet concert will consist of a work from the classical era, the early or mid Romantic era and one from either the late Romantic or early mid 20th century.

From the Classical era, I can almost guarantee that the work presented will be by Haydn, Mozart or early Beethoven. But that is not all. From Haydn's 83 quartets, of which at least 20 deserve to be heard, only a few are regularly performed—those with nicknames such as the Joke Op.33 No.2, the Bird Op.33 No.3, the Frog Op.50 No.6, the Razor Op.55 No.2, the Lark Op.64 No.5, the Quinten, the Emperor, and the Sunrise, Opp.76 Nos 2-4 respectively. And not all of these are among his best. Now and then, another work slips in, but it is a rare occasion. As for Mozart, the situation is the same—the Dissonant K.465, the Hoffmeister K.499 and the three Prussian Quartets K.574, 589 and 590 are those which get performed. At least, it can be said that these are his best. As for Beethoven's so called early quartets, the Op.18, Nos 4 and 6 are the two which receive regular outings. Yet No.1 which is as fine or finer than the those two almost never gets a concert outing. More importantly, never does one get to hear, to name but three important classical era composers, a quartet by Franz Krommer, Joseph Woelfl or Paul Wranitzky, all of whom wrote several string quartets which deserve to be played in concert or at the very least in homes of amateur enthusiasts. Contemporaries regarded the quartets of Krommer and Woelfl the equal and in some cases superior to those of Haydn. And Beethoven held the works of Wranitzky in the highest regard.

In the Romantic era, the choices are almost always a work by Mendelssohn, Schumann, Dvorak or Brahms. If a work from the 20th century is to be presented, it will almost certainly be by

Bartok or Shostakovich or perhaps a living composer who has had a work commissioned by the quartet performing it.

There are several reasons for this sad state of affairs. In talking with professional players over many years, I have heard a number of explanations put forward. One common scapegoat often cited is the demand of the Box Office. Common wisdom has it that only the well-known or famous works will fill the concert hall. Sometimes the fault lies with the sponsoring organization which requests the old chestnuts. Often the artists themselves neither wish nor have time to explore and prepare new works which bear the risk of being poorly received. Whatever the reasons though, the result is that the same works are performed over and over to the exclusion of any others.

As wonderful as the quartets of the so called Greats are, I do not wish to hear the same ones at every string quartet concert I attend. Nor do I wish to confine myself to playing only these quartets at my regular quartet sessions if one is not being prepared by us for a performance. Familiarity does indeed breed contempt and musically, it is possible to get too much of a good thing. I can well recall, in my youth, purchasing rock hits and playing them non-stop for a month and then never wishing to hear them again. It may be unfair to compare a rock hit with a string quartet of Beethoven or Brahms, but I cannot agree with those who argue that one cannot hear a masterpiece too many times. Although I have the greatest love and affection for many famous works, nowadays, I will go out of my way to avoid hearing and playing them frequently, given that I have done so many times already. Doing this allows me to retain my enthusiasm for them.

But there is another excellent reason to explore the wider chamber music literature. Those who take the time and trouble to make the trip will be well rewarded and will have the opportunity to make many exciting discoveries. This is because there are an incredible number of excellent pieces, many masterpieces in their own right, awaiting a hearing. Of course, not every rediscovered work by a little known composer is a masterpiece, but one must remember that not everything Mozart, or even Beethoven, wrote is a masterpiece. The sad thing is that many marginal chamber works get performed simply because they are the work of composers who became famous by virtue of writing operas or symphonies, while truly superb pieces of chamber music by composers such as Franz Krommer, George Onslow, Friedrich Gernsheim, Heinrich von Herzogenberg, Arthur Foote, Sergei Taneyev, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Ernst von Dohnanyi, Nikolai Myaskovsky and several others sit awaiting to be discovered and revived.

There have been many composers posterity has forgotten whose music has literally been brought back to life through the efforts of devotees. For example, it seems incredible that Bach could have been consigned to oblivion at the start of the nineteenth century, yet this was the case, at least as far as public performance went. It took a Mendelssohn to get Bach's music back into the concert hall. In part, this was due to changing musical fashion and tastes. Schubert could not get his quartets published during his own life time and was virtually unknown for anything other than his lieder until 40 years after his death.

After the First World War, literally dozens of 19th century romantic era composers, who were well known up until that time, were consigned to the dustbin of musical history in the wake of a

strong anti-romantic sentiment. Judging from what commentators of that period have written, no Romantic composer's reputation was left entirely intact by this reaction. Mendelssohn and Schumann were downgraded while lesser luminaries such as Raff, Hummel, Herzogenberg, Kiel and Rheinberger to name only a few, were relegated to an existence in encyclopaedias and musical dictionaries. After the Second World War, the big names gradually bounced back but it was not until the 1960s, and almost exclusively thanks to the record industry, that the public was able to hear the music of other composers from the Romantic period. It is not only the Romantics who, en masse, were consigned to the historical role of musical footnote. There are many fine composers from the classical period whose reputations were all but snuffed out by the sheer brilliance of Mozart and Haydn as the decades passed. Yet these composers all wrote several very charming works, some unqualified masterworks, which would be welcomed by listeners and players alike.

Of the 20th century, the situation is more problematical. It is a constant that most new composers meet with resistance. It happened to Schubert and to Beethoven in their time. In the 20th century, it has happened to Stravinsky and Shostakovich, to cite but two examples among hundreds. The fact is, it is hard for any new artist to get a hearing. Beyond this, however, came the belief at the beginning of the 20th century, as first voiced by the composers of the New Vienna School, that all which could be accomplished through the use of traditional melodic writing had been. A few modernists rejected this path and created some fine work, but a very reactionary listening public usually consigned the music of even the most conservative of these composers to oblivion.

Having said this, one must come to terms with atonal and so-called experimental music. Contemporary accounts claim that the Viennese found Beethoven's Symphony No.1 to be incomprehensible cacophony. However, the story must be apocryphal. While they may not have liked it, it is inconceivable the audience found it to be merely sounds. The melodies are there. It was his increased use of woodwinds that upset the critics. Of his Late Quartets, the argument can certainly be made that few contemporaries were ready for such music, but it was tonal music, containing an occasional melody which could be sung by the average listener, along with much which due to its complexity could not.

As for atonal music, the listening public has now been exposed to it for more than a century and for those who wish to know the truth, the verdict is in. Despite many fervent supporters and committed performances by professional groups, such works, great as they may be on paper to a musicologist or the student of music theory, are not an experience the average listener generally wishes to repeat.

Why it has come to pass that so many composers felt that traditional tonality and melody should be abandoned is not a subject for this guide. But music goes on. Popular music continues to enthral, be it from India, America, Europe or Arabia, the music which most people wish to hear is music which can be sung, music which is tuneful.

Experimental music, as it has come to be regarded, may be an extraordinary experience both visually and aurally, but ultimately it is not music which someone turns on a radio to hear. It is not my purpose to pass judgment on or write a polemic against atonal or experimental music, some of which is extraordinarily interesting. Nor do I wish to attack composers who write for the violin as if it were a kind of percussion instrument. I put forward these thoughts to explain why the reader will not find works, which do not seem to recognize that violins, violas and cellos are stringed instruments. Fortunately, there is a plethora of recent music

which, while quite daring in many ways, is nonetheless appealing. The problem is having the opportunity to hear this music. Where possible, I will attempt to draw attention to such newer works.

Given this guide's main objective, little attention will be expended on famous works. Entire books have been devoted to many of these famous works. Take, for example, Beethoven's chamber music. There is little, if any more, of importance to be said on the subject by anyone writing today. Hence, this guide will only list such works for the sake of completeness.

In authoring such a guide, the reader has the right to inquire as to the qualifications that the writer brings to his or her task. I have had the opportunity to play several times a week and regularly perform chamber music for the past 50 years, mostly in amateur groups, but occasionally as a member of a professional or semi-professional ensemble. Along the way, I developed a love of the broader chamber music literature to which I was first exposed through the medium of phonograph records. To my chagrin, years of concert-going made clear that I was unlikely to ever hear such music performed live, either because the professionals did not know of the music or because the music was unavailable. When I realized this state of affairs, I undertook to obtain some of the music I had heard on disk so that at least I could play it. To this end, I began to search music stores, antiquarian dealers and libraries both in America and Europe. Later, I used my briefly held position as chamber music critic for a classical music radio station to further the cause of lesser known but fine chamber music by encouraging many of the groups passing through our city to examine them. I have, on occasion, sent copies of some of these works I unearthed to well-known ensembles currently performing. Additionally, I have served as the editor of and a frequent contributor to *The Chamber Music Journal* for more than 25 years and have headed up The International Cobbett Association for Chamber Music Research for a similar period or time.

Over the years, it occurred to me that a guide such as this was needed by players and possibly by listeners. Guides to chamber music have appeared from time to time, but have been little more than detailed analyses of a few famous works. In contrast, Cobbett's marvellous and mammoth *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* is just that, an encyclopaedia, not a practical handbook that the performer, whether professional or amateur, can rely upon in navigating the literature. In any event, it has been out of print for decades and is unlikely to ever be reprinted or digitalized.

Despite the fact I recognized the need for a different kind of guide, I did not initially consider the possibility of undertaking it myself until a number of my chamber music friends and colleagues, after regularly hearing me complain such a book was needed, suggested I had the knowledge and experience and urged me to write it myself. To this end, I have been fortunate in having had the opportunity to play thousands of pieces of chamber music by several hundred composers and with a strange sense of foresight, I had in many instances made notes on the pieces played. I have also been fortunate in collecting a large number of little known works over the years through my searches. Finally, I have had the opportunity to hear many works that I would otherwise never have encountered through the medium of records.

As to the question of whether a work is a good one and deserving of attention, the answer unfortunately must be subjective. There is, as they say, no accounting for taste and intelligent men can differ on such things. Fashion and tastes change over time as well. My judgments as to the value of most of the works discussed obviously come into play and I make no apology for them. At the same time, unlike late 19th century Viennese music critics, such as Eduard Hanslick, I do not consider myself a Tsar on the ques-

tion of Musical Worth. Therefore, I have taken considerable pains to arrive at a composite judgment based not only on my own feelings but also the opinions of my fellow players and performers and in many instances the audiences in front of whom I have had the opportunity to perform. This fact has allowed me to be able to comment with some confidence on whether a given work might be well received by an audience or would be fun for an amateur group to read through or to work on.

Still, no one person is going to know it all and I make no claim to this. Even Cobbett's Cyclopeda, with its several hundred contributors, is incomplete. This fact, in and of itself, was enough to make me consider the hopelessness of what seemed a daunting undertaking and for a long time, I thought of abandoning it. However, upon reflection, I concluded my ultimate goal was to broaden the general public's knowledge of chamber music and to rescue as many unjustifiably ignored works as I knew about. It is hoped this guide will serve as a catalyst by informing chamber music lovers about the music.

When record collectors buy records or mp3s from those companies offering new selections, they increase the chances that previously unrecorded works will see the light of day. When professional chamber music groups are urged by their audiences to present a wider offering of works from all periods, concert halls will be filled with the sounds of new and long-forgotten works. Inevitably, a by-product of this will be that music publishers will bring out modern reprints and publish new music which in turn will increase its availability among amateur players. This is something which I have already undertaken by founding a publishing firm, Edition Silvertrust, which has, to date over nearly 20 years, made more than 2,500 chamber works available. So it is with this goal in mind that I offer the reader this work.

I had originally intended to try to include whether a work had been reprinted or generally available and or had been recorded in recent times, i.e. during my active musical life, beginning circa. 1965. But works go in and out of print, sometimes quickly, as do recordings. And such information for those reading this guide years in the future would no doubt be next to useless. Nonetheless, if they have been available in recent times, there is a good chance, especially via the internet, that musicians and record collectors will be able to track down a copy of what they are looking for. As a reference resource, I think it is important to take the long view. More rediscovered works have been reprinted and recorded during the past 25 years than at any other time.

While it is arguable that there is no point in discussing works which the player is unlikely to ever get a chance to play, I have, nonetheless, included many such works, which I consider to be of merit and which I have found at antiquarian music shops. In my experience, if one is persistent, there is a good chance of finding out-of-print works. There is also the possibility of obtaining such works through university and national libraries. And now, there are several websites dedicated to digitalizing and making available parts and scores of thousands of works which have never been reprinted.

As for my treatment of famous works, as I noted earlier in this introduction, I mention them only briefly, simply for the sake of completeness. Entire books have been written about many of these quartets and I have nothing of importance to add which cannot be read elsewhere. As for the omission of experimental and atonal compositions, I make no apologies. I believe that very few people want to hear or play such works.

I wish to acknowledge all of those who have been of especial help to me over the years and without whom this work would not have

been possible. Most of these individuals have been my fellow chamber music enthusiasts who joined me in playing through a huge amount of chamber music. Some professionals, some are teachers, and some introduced me to works which I had not known. I must begin with my son and daughter: Skyler Silvertrust and Loren Silvertrust. Both are superb violinists and together, with an army of additional violists, I have played through more string quartets than probably most people on the face of the planet. Among those who joined me on this adventure are Gordon Peterson, Morton & Lura Altschuler, Henry Coretz, Mark Talent, Eric Eisenstein, Kathleen Tumminello, Richard Sherman, Jean Mielke, Thalia Collis, Kristen Wilkinson, Dr. Prof. Hugo Zeltzer, Konzertmeister Willi Boskovsky, Walter Willinhanganz, Herman Essak, Thomas & Margaret Evans, Beverly Bloom, Girard Miller, Dr. Maurice Burke, Francis & Irene Peterson, Eugene Chang, J. Steven Moore, Andrew Green, Sylvie Koval, Sally Didrickson, Tom Weyland, Siegfried Moysich, Carl Fox, Dr. Bernard Resnick, Mordy Rhodes, Lillian Cassey, Joseph Kirschner, Edward Torgerson, Darlene Rivest, George Smith, Alan Garber, Gerda Bielitz, Beverly Kaushagen, Steven Spiegel, Rose Ross, Paula Tachau, members of the Con Brio Quartet, Die Musikfreunde Quartet, The Melos Quartet of Stuttgart, The Hinman Quartet, the Lurgi Quartet and Quartetto Bel Canto.

*Raymond Silvertrust
Riverwoods, Illinois 2020*

Preface to the Second Edition

That there is a second edition is due to the generosity of Professor Carolyn Higbie who, of her own accord, approached me and graciously offered to correct all of the hundreds, if not thousands, of errors I left behind in my haste when hurriedly typing the first edition. Even though I proof read the first edition, proof reading your own work is a sure recipe for missing your errors. What's more, I must admit I am not a good proof reader. So, when Professor Higbie, a true chamber music enthusiast, contacted me, I jumped at her offer.

Finally, in addition to the correction of errors and confusing text in the first edition, I have added several new works which, at the time I wrote the first edition, I was either unfamiliar or had not had a chance to play or hear.

*Raymond Silvertrust
Mettawa, Illinois 2023*



Carl Friedrich Abel (1723-1787) born in the German town of Köthen. Like his father, he became a prominent viola da gamba and cello player. He served in the Dresden court orchestra from 1749-59 before moving to London where he was appointed chamber-musician to the Queen. He was a close friend of Johann Christian Bach whose style his

music resembles. He appears to have written three sets each of which consists of six string quartets, Opp.8, 12 and 15. which appeared between 1768 and 1780. Like J.C. Bach the style is transitional but closer to the baroque than what we consider classical era works begun by the Mannheim composers and carried forward in Vienna. Abel was considered an important composer, at least in England, during his lifetime. The quartets are interesting, from an historical standpoint, and pleasant, but not particularly memorable in any way. They are well written, not at all hard although they require a technically assured first violinist.



Johann Joseph Abert (1832-1915) was born in the Bohemian town of Kochowitz, then part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire. Abert studied double bass and composition at the Prague Conservatory and obtained a position as a bassist in the Stuttgart Hofkapelle under Peter Lindpainter's baton, whom he succeeded. Although he wrote in most genres, he was best known for his operas. The **String Quartet in A Major, Op.25** dates from 1862 and is his only

work in this genre. It shows the influence of Schumann and Mendelssohn without exactly sounding like either of them. In the first movement, Allegro non troppo, there is much bustling but the thematic material is unmemorable to say the least. Better is the Adagio which follows for the very reason the first movement was not. Its lyrical main theme is competently treated and there is also an effective, original, slinky chromatic, second subject, a duet between the first violin and cello. Here the writing rises well above average. Next comes a Scherzo. Again there is a lot of rhythmic activity but a dearth of melody. The same could be said of the finale, Allegro. I see no reason to revive this work in the concert repertoire and doubt it is worth the time of amateurs.

Walther Aeschbacher (1901-69) was born in the Swiss city of Bern. He studied cello and composition and worked as a composer and conductor. He wrote three string quartets, the first was not published, although the remaining two Opp.32 and 36 have been. I am only familiar with his **String Quartet No.2 in a minor**. It dates from 1929 and is in four movements—Grave-Andante, Sehr heftig, Variationen uber einen hebraischen Tempelgesang and Doppelfugue, allegro moderato. It is quite effectively written in what might be called a neo-baroque. It is entirely tonal, but with many episodes of wayward dissonances which are, however, always resolved. Of particular interest are the third and fourth movements. The Hebrew temple song is none other than the famous Ma'oz Tzur, the well-known Hanukah song Rock of Ages. The fourth movement presents a clever double fugue on the a theme in which the German note names spell out his own name This is an excellent work which would make a suitable entry on a concert program. It presents no real technical difficulties and can be warmly recommended to amateur groups.

Nikolai Afanasiev (also spelled Afanassiev, Afanasyev et. al. 1821-1898) was born in the Siberian city of Tobolsk. Other than violin and piano lessons which he received from his father, he had no formal musical training as none was to be had within Russia at that time. In his memoirs, he wrote that he learned the art of composition by studying the works of famous composers such as Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. He excelled as a violinist and at the



age of 17 was appointed concertmaster of the Moscow Opera Orchestra. He subsequently toured Russia and Western Europe as a soloist before settling in St. Petersburg where he spent the rest of his life. Of the major Russian composers, only Alyabiev and Glinka predate him. While such composers as Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin later became known for establishing the so-called Russian National

School of composition, i.e. using Russian folk melody, they were hardly the first. Afanasiev's music, and he wrote in virtually every genre, is filled with the melodies of Russian folk songs and the rhythms of Russian folk dances. Though he and his music are, to some extent, still known within Russia, today he is virtually unknown elsewhere, although his **String Quartet "The Volga"** enjoyed a modicum of popularity for some decades during the last part of the 19th century, especially in Germany. Some sources say that Afanasiev composed as many as 12 string quartets. However, the only one which seems to have survived is the string quartet he composed for the 1860 competition held by The Russian Musical Society. He subtitled it "The Volga" and it went on to win the First Prize. The music conjures up images of the Volga boatmen on the river. The rhythms often are redolent of the motion of waves, although it must be admitted some are quite complicated. The opening movement, Moderato, has for its main theme a heavy folk song of the Volga Boatmen. The five-beat meter of the second movement, Allegretto, is dance-like. It serves as a scherzo. An atmospheric Adagio full of ripe melody follows. The finale, Allegro non troppo, combines lyricism with further dance-like rhythms. This is a Russian-sounding work from the mid Romantic era which would surely be well-received in the concert hall, but can also be warmly recommended to amateurs.

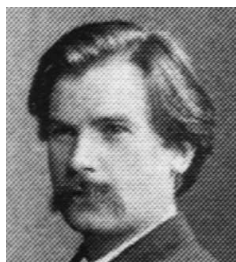
Leopold Aimon (1779-1866) was born in the French town of L'Isle sur la Sorgue not far from city of Avignon. He studied cello and composition with his father Esprit Aimon a cellist and director of music for the Danish ambassador to France. His talent was such that he procured several jobs as a conductor of various theater orchestras in Marseilles and Paris. As most composers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, he wrote a large number of works. Several of his operas were frequently performed in France and beyond. He is said to have composed some thirty string quartets as well as other chamber music which was apparently well thought of as evidenced by the list of subscribers, individuals who donated money to help make publication of a composer's works possible. I am familiar with and have played three of his works listed below.

The **String Quartet in f minor** is the first work from the 12 New Quartets Collection was published in 1814. These 12 quartets were composed over a period of some six years from 1807 to 1813. The work opens with a dramatic, hard-driving Allegro which combines the style of the late classical era and early emerging romantic. A particularly interesting effect is the use of rising and descending half steps in the development section. The second movement, Minuetto, allegro molto, is a classical style minuet dominated by its chromaticism. A contrasting trio section with a sweet melody follows. In third place is a delicate Andante with a very romantic folk melody main theme. Though not so marked it is a set of variations. The finale, Allegro agitato, starts off in agitated fashion as the movement marking suggests. This restlessness is felt through out the movement. Certainly not a candidate to enter the repertoire, however, it is good enough to be heard in concert and is historically important as an example of early 19th century French chamber music. Not hard to play and can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet in g minor is the third work from the 12 New Quartets Collection was published in 1814. The main theme of the opening movement, Allegro risoluto. is somewhat sad and melan-

choly. The second movement, Andante, poco adagio, shows that Aimon was quite conversant with the music of late Vienna classical period. Its lyricism recalls the kind of slow movement Haydn was writing in the last decade of the 18th century. In third place is a heavily accented Minuetto allegro, again more Viennese than French. A nicely contrasting trio follows. There is a continuous sense of restlessness to the finale, Allegro agitato, which created in part by its off-beat rhythms. Like the first, it is good enough for an occasional airing and recommended to amateurs.

His **String Quartet in C Major, Op.45 No.2** is the second of a set of three published in Paris. Although published around 1820, they must have actually been composed some years before this as the dedicatee, Baron d'Horne, died in 1819. The work opens with an Allegro risoluto, has a recurring downward scale passage in the lower voices which gives the music an interesting and original feel. In the second movement, Minuetto, the main subject begins with a unison passage which is reappears regularly with dialogues between the various voices. There is no trio as such. This is followed by a delicate and lovely Andante, poco adagio. The finale, Allegretto, starts off in a genial, relaxed fashion, but soon the tempo and excitement pick up. In the same category as the first two.



Eugène D'Albert (1864-1932) who was one of the great piano virtuosos of his generation, was born in Glasgow to an English mother and a French father. After beginning piano lessons with his father, he eventually won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London where he studied with Arthur Sullivan among others. While there, he was heard by the famous conductor Hans Richter who sent him to see Liszt in Vienna.

In Vienna, d'Albert met Brahms who was very impressed by his playing. So was Liszt, who took him on as a student and came to call him Albertus Magnus as a tribute to his talent. After completing his studies with Liszt, D'Albert embarked on a successful concert career which included a series of legendary concerts in which he, under the baton of Brahms, interpreted the latter's two piano concertos. Although he grew up in England, d'Albert felt himself drawn to Germany and Austria and began to use the German form of his first name, eventually settling in Germany. His compositions were admired by Liszt, Brahms, Richter & Eduard Hanslick among others. He wrote two string quartets. **String Quartet No.1, Op.7 in a minor** dates from 1886-7. It is four movements, the first is marked *Liedenschaftlich bewegt* (Passionately agitated). This properly describes the main theme. The writing exhibits considerable chromaticism and has episodes of Lisztian tonality more advanced than what one finds in Brahms. A surprising fugue brings the movement to close. A certain cohesion to the musical thought, however, is missing, perhaps caused by the abundance of ideas. The next movement, *Langsam mit Ausdruck* (slow with expression) although huge, does not have this problem. It is lyrically elegiac and contains effective writing for strings. Then comes a very fine and original-sounding scherzo, *Mäßig Bewegt* (moderate tempo). This is a kind of quick waltz. The trio section is faster yet. The finale, *In maßiger, ruhiger Bewegung-Thema mit Variationen* (Moderate & peaceful, theme & variations) is the longest of the four movements and begins with a charming theme. Among the many variations, some are particularly interesting and adventurous tonally. Yet it must be said that the choice of a theme & variation format—rarely effective for finales—was probably ill-advised. Although this is a good work, it is not first rate all the way through. The excellence of the middle movements is dimmed somewhat by the outer ones.

String Quartet No.2, Op.11 in E Flat, also in four movements, was composed in 1893 and dedicated to Brahms, who in his letter thanking D'Albert, noted that the opening theme to the

first movement, Andante con moto, shows some resemblance to the beginning of Beethoven's Op.127 Quartet. This is a spacious movement, yet the unity of thought is preserved. An absolutely extraordinary scherzo, Allegro vivace, follows. This rhythmically interesting (3/4, 2/4, 5/4, 6/8) and exotic, bizarre and very tonally advanced music has an almost, but not quite, French flavor to it. All the voices are muted in a hectic, insect-like buzzing. The short, genial trio section provides a good contrast. The Quartet's center of gravity is clearly the Adagio ma non troppo e con molto espressione. Much of the movement is characterized by the beautiful cantilena, high in the violin register, while the other voices almost independently explore the supporting harmony. The buoyant finale, Allegro, opens with a richly romantic theme, which shows some Brahmsian influence. It is music full of joy and lovely melodies as well as an effective conclusion. This quartet would be an ornament in any professional quartet's repertoire. Although not particularly easy to play or to sight read, it can be recommended to experience amateur players



Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736-1809) was born in the Austrian town of Klosterneuburg not far from Vienna. He studied organ at the famous Melk Abbey. Through diligent work, he became perhaps the leading expert of counterpoint in his time and as a result became one of the most sought after teachers in Europe. Among his many students were Ludwig Beethoven, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Ignaz

Moscheles, Anton Reicha, Ferdinand Ries, Friedrich Kalkbrenner, Joseph Eybler and Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart. Besides teaching, he held several important posts as an organist, including to the Imperial Court in Vienna. Like most of his contemporaries, he was a prolific composer, writing numerous works for piano and organ as well as chamber music, including perhaps as many as a dozen string quartets. In addition, he wrote several influential theoretical works on harmony and counterpoint. I have played a few of his quartets and heard a few more. They are pleasant, written in an early classical style, but unremarkable. And though certainly an important name in the history, if for no other reason than all of the famous students he taught, I cannot recommend that any time be spent with his quartets.



Franco Alfano (1875-1954) born in Naples, if remembered at all, it is for completing Puccini's opera *Turandot*. An opera composer himself, he wrote three string quartets. In Italy, I heard in concert his **String Quartet No.2**. It clearly was not an easy work, and technically it was overly complicated, which no doubt has kept it from the concert hall and off the music stands of amateurs.



Anatoly Alexandrov (1888-1982) was born in Moscow and attended the conservatory there where he studied piano and composition with Sergei Taneyev among others. He eventually became a professor there as well. He wrote four string quartets between 1914 and 1953. I am only familiar with his **String Quartet No.1 in G Major** which I have played a few times. It dates from 1914 and was revised by Alexandrov in 1921. The works sounds like a pastiche of Scriabin and late French Impressionism. It has several exotic touches bordering on the bizarre. It may be that the influence Georgi Catoire also affected him at this time. Structurally, it is traditional and in four movements—Allegro moderato, Allegret-

to, Andante affetuoso and Misterioso, non troppo lento. Technically it was not difficult but thematically it seemed rather amorphous with nothing to hold onto. His piano music seems to have enjoyed some attention for the experimental and unusual effects, but his chamber music has sunk into oblivion, like a rock thrown in a pond. It requires more than one playing to make sense of.

Joao Pedro de Almeida Mota (1744-1817) was born in Lisbon. His musical training was at the Chapel Royal in that city. He emigrated to Spain in 1771 and remained there for the rest of life, eventually settling in Madrid where he obtained a position at the Chapel Royal after holding a number of posts in smaller towns. In Spain, he was often referred to in documents as Juan Pedro de Almeida. Most of his compositions are for the Church, however, he wrote secular works for orchestra and string quartet. Scholars now believe that there were at least 42 quartets. Of these, several from his Op. V, VI and VII which were located in the archives of the Chapel Royal have received modern reprints and have been recorded. I have listened to a number of these from his Op.V and VI and have played two quartets from the **Op.V No.3 in D Major** and **No.4 in B flat Major**. The quartets were written in the late 1790s or around 1800 and were dedicated to King Carlos IV who apparently was fond of chamber music. While they do not sound anything like what was being written in Vienna at the time even by conservative composers such as Paul Wranitzky or Franz Krommer, they do show a familiarity with onset of the Vienna Classical Style. In other words, they sound much like what Haydn was writing in the 1770s and early 1780s. This is interesting because the quartets of Boccherini, who was almost an exact contemporary, bear no resemblance to anything coming out of Vienna. They are each in four movements and alternate between the earlier concertante style of the Wranitzky and Krommer and group ensemble sound of Haydn. While the first violin clearly dominates, interestingly, the viola and cello are each given extensive solos and are an integral part of the group ensemble parts. These quartets have pleasant melodies and are not at all difficult to play. They can be recommended to amateurs but outside of their historical interest ought not to be brought back into the concert hall.



William Alwyn (1905-1985) was born in the English town of Northampton. He studied flute and composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London with John Blackwood McEwen and later became a professor there. He was a prolific composer and wrote sixteen string quartets. They were all unnumbered, starting with his first effort in 1920 at the age of 15 right up until his fourteenth string quartet to which he 1953. Musicologists have now gone back and numbered the first thirteen. **String Quartet No.10 'En Voyage'** dates from 1932. The quartet takes its name from the fact that Alwyn was return from a nine month visit to Australia and was on a ship in the Pacific Ocean when he composed the work. Each movement has a title. The opening movement, *Departure*, is an Adagio which is mostly quiet without any drama. Perhaps the seas were calm. The second movement, Allegro, subtitle *Sea Birds*, is a kind of scherzo conveying the idea of birds flying above the ship. Next comes *The Lonely Waters*, an Adagio ma non troppo in which the strings are muted and not much happens conveying empty horizons and calm sea. The finale, Vivace, is named *Trade Winds*, is upbeat and for the most part lively. Tonal, the quartet would be interesting for concert and is not too hard for amateurs.

String Quartet No. 11 was composed the following year in 1933. It is in three movements. The opening Andante ma non troppo is relatively quiet and somewhat mysterious sounding. The middle section is marked Allegro con brio and is quite attractive

but also a bit frenetic and full of forward movement. In the second movement, Andante e semplice, once again as in Quartet No.10 the strings are muted giving an air of mystery. The finale, Moderato e quieto, begins with a series of relaxed rising and falling passages. The mood is a bit like dreamily looking out the window of a slow moving train. Slowly, however, tension rises to a furious climax before retreating. This quartet sound much like the preceding one. It has much to recommend it. Again, it is tonal but traditionally so and there are certainly no melodies in either work that etch their way into one's memory like a tune that could be sung. Perhaps not as compelling as No.10 though still good and playable by amateurs. In 1935, he composed a one movement Fantasia dedicated to his fellow composer Alan Bush. Dubbed

String Quartet No.12, it is not easy to play and not, in my opinion, particularly interesting or worth your time. **String Quartet No.13** is in two movement and dates from 1936. The opening movement, Adagio e largamente e marcato, literally burst upon the stage, so to speak, from its powerful opening notes. It has an angry lugubrious quality to it which certainly holds the listener's attention. The second movement, Allegro molto e vivace, could not be more different in mood. Light and feathery and full of bustle. Strong enough for concert and experienced amateurs.

What is now being called **String Quartet No.1** is actually No.14, composed in 1955 nearly twenty years after No.13. In four movements. The opening Moderato e grazioso, is not particularly graceful but searching and nervous. It does not make a strong impression. Next comes an Allegro molto. It begins very softly and has a spooky quality reminiscent of Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, but though at times interesting it is not compelling. A dark, distraught Adagio serves and the third movement. The finale, Allegro vivace, has a prancing rhythm and a sense of urgency and is certainly the best of the movements but fine as it is, it does entirely make up for the other three.

String Quartet No.2 (No.15) came some twenty years later in 1975. It is subtitled *Spring Waters*. The question which springs to mind is why, and does it refer to the season or water coming from underground. In either event, the opening Moderato, lento sounds like neither, but more like an automobile accident and its aftermath. The middle movement, Allegro scherzando, is angular and could have been accompanied a Hitchcock film. The last movement is in four parts, alternating Adagios and Allegros. The adagio with which it begins and which goes on for far too long begins by sounding like a door which needs oiling and leads to a deserted darkened house. Finally turbulence interrupts this and on it goes. The best that can be said is it conveys a series of moods, none of which appear to have anything to do with water or Spring or springs. Beyond amateurs, might do okay in concert.

String Quartet No.3 (No.16) composed in 1984, the year before his death is in two movements. The opening Allegro molto does not appear to be meant to appeal with its edgy dissonance. The second movement, an Adagio with an Allegro middle section, like the preceding movement has none of the tonality of the earlier works and is not for amateurs and not, in my opinion, a great experience for listeners either.



Alexander Alyabiev (1787-1851 also transliterated variously as Aliabiev, Alabyev, Alabiev, Alaybieff etc.) was born in the Siberian city of Tobolsk which served as the capital of Western Siberia until 1917. At the time of his birth, his father was governor of the province. The family moved to St. Petersburg in 1796 where Alyabiev received piano lessons. He lived a rather romantic life, joining the Tsar's army to fight against the invading French in 1812. He took part in the Battle of Borodino. It was

about this time that his first songs were published. He became a decorated officer and continued to serve with the Army until 1823 after which he lived in St. Petersburg. He was suspected of being a member of the Decembrists, a group which tried to assassinate the Tsar in 1825. Proof was hard to come by so a false charge of murder was lodged against him. After a rigged trial, he was exiled to Siberia until 1832 after which time he was allowed to move to the Caucasus for medical reasons. He lived there until 1843 and much of his music shows the influence of this region. He wrote works in virtually every genre and is thought to have penned 3 string quartets, 2 piano trios, a piano quintet, a woodwind quintet and several instrumental sonatas. Today he is remembered for one piece, a song *The Nightingale*, which became incredibly famous and has remained in the repertoire. His other works, many of which were censored, fell into oblivion and he remained forgotten until the centennial anniversary of his death in 1951 brought about renewed interest in his works. Literally hundreds lay untouched and forgotten in the dusty archives of the Central Moscow State Museum Library. He began composing his 500 works long before Glinka was on the scene and probably was just as deserving of the title Father of Russian Music. (He wrote several operas on Russian subjects long before Glinka did, e.g. *Prisoner of the Caucasus* based on Pushkin. *Fate is quixotic*.) String quartet Nos.1 and 3 were recorded in the Soviet Union and were either published there or performed off of a copyists set of parts from the scores. In any event, neither parts nor score have appeared in the West until recently when after several attempts, I obtained a copy of the scores and have had parts to the quartets made. **String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major** dates from 1815 and is in four movements., Stylistically it sounds like late Haydn however Alyabiev makes better much use of the cello than Haydn. The brooding slow introduction to the jaunty finale is very effective, perhaps operatic.

Alyabiev's **String Quartet No.3 in G Major** dates from 1825. In four movements, a genial opening *Allegro* followed by a *Scherzo*, *allegro*, then an *Adagio* which is a theme and set of excellent variations., the most striking of which is given to the cello. The theme upon which the variations are based is from his famous song *The Nightingale*. The work ends with a lively *Allegro*. This quartet shows that Alyabiev was not only conversant with the music of the Vienna classics but also with the emerging early Romantic style. It belongs with the early Beethoven and middle Schubertian works. Both quartets are quite good and can be recommended to amateurs and No.3 could withstand concert performance.



Alfredo D'Ambrosio (1871-1914) was born in Naples. His initial studies were at the Naples Conservatory where he studied violin with Giuseppe Pinto and composition with Enrico Bossi, after which continued his violin studies with Pablo de Sarasate in Madrid and then with August Wilhelmj in London. He spent most of his life in Nice where he became a prominent teacher and leader of a well-known string quartet.

Several of his works for violin were popularized by violinists such as Sarasate, Heifetz, Elman, Kreisler and many others. He also was a prominent arranger and editor and still is known today for his work in these areas. Besides numerous works for violin, including two concertos, he wrote an opera *Pia de Tolomei*, a ballet *Ersilia*, a string quintet and a string quartet. His **String Quartet in c minor, Op.42** dates from 1908 and enjoyed considerable popularity until after the First World War when tastes changed at works from the late Romantic era fell out of favor. Written with the intimate knowledge of string instruments, this is a fresh sounding work combining elements of Italian melody with Central European Romanticism and French Impressionism. The opening movement, *Moderato*, begins with a moody melody full

of yearning over a restless accompaniment. There is just the vaguest touch of the exotic. The second movement, *Allegro*, takes the form of a bright, sunny *scherzo*. The engaging and at times playful theme has an Italian quality. A searching second theme follows. An intense and heavily perfumed *Andante*, which serves as the slow movement, comes next. Though the dynamics are restrained, the strong emotional quality of the music is very apparent and effectively conveyed. The finale, *Allegro energico*, bursts forth driven more by its thrusting rhythm than the melody, but later lovely and more lyrical melody provides a fine contrast. Here is a fine and fresh work which should be of interest not only to professionals but also experienced amateurs both of whom will certainly find it a rewarding a first rate work.



Johann Andreas Amon (1763-1825) was born in a small village just outside of the German city of Bamberg. His early musical training was from members of the court orchestra. His first instrument was the violin but later he developed an interest in the horn and became quite proficient. About this time, he attracted the attention of the famous Bohemian horn virtuoso who went by the name of Giovanni di Punto. (His real

name was Jan Vaclav Stich). Di Punto was serving as first horn and took Amon under his tutelage. Not long after, in the 1780's, di Punto embarked on a solo tour which took him to Paris. Amon went with and toured with him, ultimately becoming a virtuoso in his own right. Later he held positions as music director at various courts. A relatively prolific composer, he wrote a fair amount of chamber music. His **String Quartet in B flat Major, Op.113 No.1** is the first of a set of three published around 1825 but were clearly composed two or three decades earlier. The cover page to the quartets lists a dedication "To Students" which indicates that these works were intended for amateurs or students looking for suitable works for performance. Each of the voices is given solos. The opening movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is bright and upbeat. A lively *Minuetto* and trio follows. Next is a stately *Adagio* in the tradition of Haydn. The finale, simply marked *Rondo*, is actually a fetching *Polonaise*. It is not difficult and can be recommended to amateurs looking for a performance work.



Volkmar Andreae (1879-1962) was born in the Swiss capital of Bern. He studied at the Cologne Conservatory under Carl Munzinger and after a short stint at Munich working as an opera coach, he moved to Zurich where he lived for the rest of his life, becoming one of the most important figures on the Swiss musical scene. From 1906 to 1949, he was conductor of the renowned Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra and headed the Zurich Conservatory

from 1914 to 1939. He conducted throughout Europe as was regarded as one of the foremost interpreters of Bruckner. In addition to his work as a conductor and teacher, he devoted considerable time to composing. While his works received praise from contemporary critics, like those of so many other modern composers, his works were not given a place in the standard repertoire. He has two string quartets to his credit.

His **String Quartet No.1 in B flat Major** dates from 1905. The very fresh and original first movement, *Ziemlich bewegtes Zeitmass (Allegro moderato)* begins in the style of a fanfare. It has a lyrical main subject. The second theme full of feeling is also very effective. The development is masterly. The second movement, *So rasch als möglich* (as quick as possible), is a *scherzo* with two trios. The main theme is a wild chase, but the second theme has a march-like quality. The trio section in which both violins present the melody over the accompaniment in the lower

voices is highly original. The second trio with its wayward harmony is a plaint, with deep feeling. The next movement, Langsamers Zeitmass (Slow), though not immediately apparent, is a very loose form of a Theme and Variations. Again there is a deeply felt melody with very intricate tonalities. The finale, Lebhaft bewegt (Vivace), has for its main subject a magnificent march-like melody. A joyful second theme is followed by a fugue. All this is followed by a superb, lyrical theme toward the end. It definitely deserves concert performance, but experienced amateurs will also appreciate this fine work.

String Quartet No.2 in E Major, Op.33 appeared in 1921. It is lighter in mood and shorter than the First Quartet. The first movement, Andante moderato, has pleasing melodies, the second theme is particularly attractive. The muted second movement, Allegretto mosso, is quite original. The dance-like main section is humorous and tonally is quite appealing. A slow movement, Molto lento is a warm, deeply felt elegy which is interrupted by a stormy middle section. The spirited finale, Allegro molto, is quite pleasing with its fine themes and dance-like rhythm. This quartet plays quite well and does not present any great technical problems. In the concert hall it is sure to make a strong impression. The only reason it did not enter the repertoire that I can think of is because Andreae was Swiss and not German or Austrian.



Conrad Ansorge (1862-1930) was born in the German town of Buchwald, now in Poland. He studied piano and composition at the Leipzig Conservatory with Carl Reinecke and Salomon Jadassohn but left early to study with Franz Liszt. He was known as a touring solo pianist, and in particular for his interpretation of Beethoven. He composed two string quartets but neither of these can be recommended to amateurs because of their difficulty. Both are harder to put together and to get an understanding of than Late Beethoven. **String Quartet No.1 in A flat Major** dates from 1904. It is a very serious, heavy work. The opening movement Andante sostenuto ed espressivo conveys a sense of resignation throughout, including a fugal episode. Beethoven's Op.131 must have been his model. The Allegro non troppo ed energico which follows is full of what the Germans like to call Weltschmerz, literally in English world pain, but convey melancholy, pessimism and weariness. The Adagio ma non troppo, which serves as the third movement, again is characterized by its fugue and though not as grim as the preceding movement, is not without a sense of pain. The finale, opens with an Andante maestoso introduction which leads to the main section Allegro non troppo in which we hear the fugue from the second movement. It is a powerful work, but an acquired taste, which is not going to be acquired on first hearing.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.20 dates from 1911. The great sorrow Ansorge felt when writing the first quartet seems to have left him. While the quartet is easier for listeners, it is no less easy for performers and will certainly take professionals quite some time to bring it to a level where it could be taken into the concert hall and for that reason alone, I do not think it will be brought there. However, both quartets can be managed by amateurs who know their way around Late Beethoven and are ready for the challenge.

Anton Arensky (1861-1906) was the son of keen amateur musicians. His early training was as a pianist. At 18, he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he developed into yet another of Rimsky Korsakov's more than competent students. He ultimately became a professor at the Moscow Conservatory where Rachmaninov, Gliere, Skryabin and Conyus were students of his. Tchaikovsky and Taneyev were



among his colleagues and friends. With the exception of his piano trios, his two string quartets, along with his piano quintet, must be considered his most important chamber works.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.11 dates from 1888. The Allegro opens with a very dramatic, almost virtuosic, first theme. A slight Andante is full of contrapuntal writing. The canonic Minuetto allegretto which follows sounds like something out of Les Vendredis, the salon pieces composed for Mikhail Belaiev's Friday evening soirees. The finale, Variations sur un thème russe is clearly the most striking and exciting of the movements with many extraordinary effects in the succeeding variations.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op.35 was composed some seven years later in 1895 and bears the inscription "To the memory of Tchaikovsky". Originally composed for violin, viola and two cellos no doubt to give the work a darker quality than that of the normal ensemble. It is perhaps the only quartet in the literature for this combination, which resulted in Arensky's demanding that he make an arrangement for the traditional line up of two violins, viola and cello. Arensky did so. The repeated opening chords of the first movement, Moderato, sound very much like a Russian Orthodox funeral service. The music is at once quite striking and reminiscent of a similar movement in Tchaikovsky's third string quartet, which was meant to commemorate his friend the violinist Ferdinand Laub. A dramatic second theme, while not exactly happy, relieves the earlier somber mood which ultimately returns and closes this long but very finely-wrought movement. The theme to Thème moderato et variations is again somber; this time like a hymn from the Volga boatmen. Roughly half the length of this three movement work, the variations are quite elaborate with each instrument given the lead while the composer explores all of the tonal and textural possibilities of which four string instruments are capable. The mood lightens and at times wanders considerably from the original theme: here a scherzo, there a lyrical song, and at last a somber plaint. Certainly this is as fine a movement of chamber music as Arensky wrote. The relatively short finale Andante sostenuto-Allegro moderato begins in the same somber mood where previous movement left off. But this dirge-like heaviness is soon relieved by a robust church anthem tune which brings the quartet to rousing finish. Both works are good for either concert or home, but the second is a stunner.

Carl Arnold (1794-1873) was born in the German town of Neunkirchen in Baden-Wurtemberg. He studied piano and composition with Aloys Schmitt house composer for the famous Andre publishing firm of Offenbach. When his father died, Johann Offenbach adopted Arnold. For several years he pursued a career as a touring concert pianist, spending long periods in Warsaw, St Petersburg and Berlin. In 1848, he moved to the Norwegian capital Christiania (now Oslo where he lived for the rest of his life working as a teacher and composer. Johan Svendsen was among his many students. A very successful composer of songs, Arnold did write some chamber music including his String Quartet in g minor, Op.19 which dates from 1825. In four movements, the quartet opens with an appealing Allegro moderato which clearly shows that Arnold was familiar with the works of the Vienna classicists. In fact, the work sounds rather like early Schubert or Franz Krommer. The second movement, Andante, features a simple folk-like melody for its main theme, variations follow. Next comes an upbeat Menuetto, allegro con spirito with a nicely contrasting trio section. The finale, Allegro con brio is by turns exciting and very lyrical. This is a solid quartet with good part-writing and attractive melodies. It could perhaps be brought to the concert hall as a replacement for a Haydn and certainly will give pleasure to amateur groups.





The Venice of the North, the Rome of South America, the Paris of the Middle East—each epithet intended as a compliment, but with the subtle reminder that the subject is not as good as that to which it's being compared. In the case of the so-called 'Spanish Mozart,' as **Juan Cristostomo Jacobo Antonio de Arriaga** (1806-1826) has come to be known, by the few who know of him, a reminder is

hardly necessary. There is only one Mozart. Still, there is something to the comparison. Arriaga died shortly before his 20th birthday but during his short life showed tremendous promise. What would we have thought of Mozart had he died at 20? Certainly, he would still be known, but he would have had a vastly different reputation. The fact is, there are not too many composers with whose names we would be familiar if they had died so young. Arriaga was born in the Spanish-Basque city of Bilbao to a family of means—his father ran a successful shipping business but had also been a musician of some accomplishment, having served as a church organist and music director. Apparently, music was one of the father's loves. And, it did not escape him that his son had been born on the 50th anniversary of Mozart's birth. As a result, the first two Christian names of both composers are the same albeit in Spanish. In Bilbao, Arriaga received some sort of musical training, presumably from his father on organ and at the local music academy on violin and composition. This presumption is supported by the fact that his first work is dedicated to the Music Academy of Bilbao. By age 10, he was said to be playing 2nd violin in a professional string quartet and had written an Octet for String Quartet, Bass, Trumpet, Guitar and Piano interestingly titled *Nada y Mucho* (Nothing & A Lot). Like Mozart, Arriaga composed his first opera, *Los Esclavos Felices* (The Happy Slaves) at the age of 13. It was performed immediately and enjoyed considerable local success. Recognizing that their son was more than just talented, Arriaga's parents decided to send him to Paris to further his musical education. There he studied violin with Baillet and composition with Fétis, the well-known music historian, from whom we have virtually all there is to know of the composer. Fétis later wrote that Arriaga mastered harmony in three months and counterpoint in under two years. By 1824, at the age of 18, Arriaga was appointed to teach harmony and counterpoint at the Conservatory and issued the only works that were published during his lifetime, his three string quartets upon which, for the most part, his scanty reputation rests. During the remainder of his life, Arriaga composed at a furious rate producing several works, including a symphony, a mass and several songs. Never of robust health, Arriaga died in 1826. Despite Fétis's making much of the great loss the musical world sustained when Arriaga died, both he and his works were nonetheless promptly forgotten until the 20th century when he was rediscovered by the Spanish musical community in search of their roots. Few others seem to have heard of him. The Quartets were probably composed during 1821-22 while Arriaga was still a student and were dedicated to his father. They have been in print for as long as I can remember, yet I can never recall anyone I played with bringing them out for a try. It was not until I purchased the set myself that I began my rewarding relationship with these charming works. Since then, I have played and performed all of them. In my opinion, the quartets do not sound much like either Mozart or Haydn. If they show any resemblance to a well-known composer, it might be to Schubert or early Beethoven. But it is unlikely that Arriaga ever works by either of these composers as none of Schubert's were published during his lifetime and Beethoven was not generally held in high regard at that time in France.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor is perhaps the most striking of the set because of the Spanish melodies which appear throughout. The first theme to the opening Allegro, while not particularly

Spanish, is dark and forceful and played in unison to create a powerful effect: The music is at one and the same time unsettled and restless, energetically charging here and there. It is with the captivating second theme, introduced by the first violin, that we initially hear Spanish melody. The whole movement is in minor until the coda during which he suddenly switches to major. The second movement, *Adagio con espressione* is rhythmically very intricate and full of long 32nd note passages primarily in the first violin part. The opening theme is tender and expressive while the second theme, full of pathos bears some resemblance to that found in Schubert's *Death & the Maiden*: The third movement, *Minuetto*, is a conventional minuet effective and the only part of the quartet which shows any influence by Haydn. The trio, however is an altogether different matter. To the pizzicato accompaniment of the lower three strings, the first violin is given a formal 18th century Spanish dance: It is a precursor of a modern day flamenco dance with guitar. The finale, *Adagio-Allegretto*, has a slow introduction followed by a riding-type theme in 6/8. There is a danger in playing it too quickly which not only results in the loss of elegance but also a nasty surprise when 'all hell breaks loose' in the second theme with its furious 16th note passages. Despite the turbulent episodes, the quartet closes on a soft note. Although the most original sounding of the three works, the First Quartet in some ways is also the weakest. The passage work in both the first and last movement involves several tricky handoffs from voice to voice and it is difficult at times to avoid a herky-jerky performance of the music. But there is no doubt that the quartet should be heard in concert and would provide welcome relief from the inevitable and over-performed Haydns and Mozarts that we are so often force-fed by unimaginative ensembles and programmers.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major opens with an attractive bravura theme which has a rhythm which seems to be based on his surname, at least in English. Arriaga seems particularly alive to the cello's possibilities without actually having to give it a solo as he did in the first quartet. The second movement, *Andante*, is a theme and set of five variations. The theme is very simple, on the order of a children's nursery melody but the variations are ingenious and well-constructed. The *Minuetto* which follows is slight and has a classical Viennese sound to it. The gentle trio though unremarkable provides a good contrast. In the finale, *Andante ma non troppo-Allegro*, we have a stop-go or slow-fast situation a little like one finds in the last movement to Beethoven's Sixth Quartet, *La Malinconia*. The contrast and change of mood all illustrate Arriaga's skill in what is a very good movement.

The first theme to the opening movement, *Allegro*, of **String Quartet No. 3 in E flat Major** gives the feeling of having begun almost in mid-phrase. The development is basically upward and downward scale passages passed back and forth between the violins and cello. There is a lot of rushing about but the melodic material seems somewhat thin. The second movement, *Pastorale-Andantino*, more than makes up for any shortcoming in the first. The first theme is a gentle and lilting lullaby. The extraordinary middle section is reminiscent of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony where a storm of great turbulence breaks loose. The cello and first violin trade outbursts to the pulsing tremolo in the inner voices. The storm starts to wane but then bursts forth yet again. At last it subsides and the gentle *pastorale* melody breaks forth. This is a very striking and effective movement. The following *Menuetto* is competent and shows, as do the other minuets, some influence from Haydn. The trio is almost a rhythmic quote from the introduction to last movement of the Second Quartet. The finale, *Presto agitato*, opens in dramatic fashion with an attractive melody, and it only gets better as it progresses. A fetching second theme, which sounds somewhat Spanish, is passed from voice to voice with telling effect throughout this fine movement. In sum, these three quartets by Arriaga deserve to be heard in concert and

to be played by all chamber music lovers. The music is tuneful, original sounding and has good part writing.



Franz Asplmayer (1728-1786) was born in the Austrian town of Linz. He studied violin with his father and was largely self-taught as a composer. He moved to Vienna in the late 1740's and served as a violinist in the Imperial Court Orchestra. In Vienna, he made the acquaintance of Haydn and later Mozart. A prolific composer, as were most of this era, he is said to have composed some 42 string quartets. A few have received modern editions. Scholars note that along with that of Haydn and Jan Baptist Vanhal, Asplmayer made a major contribution to the development of the early Vienna Classical Style which built on the works of Johann Stamitz and the other composers of the Mannheim School which led to a change of musical style throughout Europe. Asplmayer combines the advances of the Mannheim school with developments in Vienna. An example of this Viennese influence can be found in two of his **String Quartets in D Major, Op.2 No.2 and No.4**. Op.2 is one of only three quartets I know of his to have received a modern edition. Interestingly, both are in four movements rather than the standard three found in most Mannheim works. While we do not know exactly when they were composed, it certainly was before 1775 and most likely in the 1760's. Works from this period, today are never considered great masterpieces, nonetheless, some, such as his Op.2 quartets, show from what foundation Haydn and Mozart were to build, and hence are of historical importance. These are well-written and easy to play.



Kurt Atterberg (1887-1974) was born in the Swedish city of Gothenberg. As a boy he studied the cello locally before moving to Stockholm. There he studied engineering but also entered the Stockholm Conservatory taking composition lessons although most sources claim that he was essentially a self-taught composer. For most of his life, he pursued a dual career as an engineer, while at the same time composing in most genres. Like so many other late Romantic composers, his music was buried by the rush to atonalism after the First World War.

He is sometimes listed as having composed three string quartet, however, the so-called **String Quartet No.1, Op.2** from 1909 was incomplete and only two movements a scherzo and a romance, despite this it was apparently published. He came back to it in 1936, reworked it a bit and combined it with two other movements to make a four movement work. So, in essence, there are only two string quartets.

Atterberg's **String Quartet No.2 in b minor, Op.11** dates from 1916 and was dedicated to "The Splinter", a reference to those composers who had broken away from the Chamber Music Society of Stockholm and had tried unsuccessfully to start another rival association. The impetus for the work came when his friend and fellow composer Natanael Berg suggested that they each write a quartet of less than 16 minutes duration as an act of defiance toward the stodgy Chamber Music Society. The first movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, has a symphonic quality to it. Atterberg later wrote that in the second movement, *Andante*, he had a beautiful ballerina in mind. The finale, *Allegro furioso*, is a cross between a thrusting march and a wild dance. This quartet is original sounding and impressive in many ways. It deserves concert performance and can be recommended to experienced and technically assured amateurs.

Atterberg's **String Quartet No.3 in D Major, Op.39** as noted above is actually a combination of his first string quartet, his Op.2, with the addition of two additional movements. The two outer movements, that is to say the first and last movements are

Op.39, the middle two movements are from Op.2. The work begins with an upbeat *Allegro* with a lovely, flowing melody. As the movement unfolds, a nervous forward motion takes over and the overall effect is one of pleasant energy. The second movement, a *Presto*, which he subtitled *Scherzo*, is played muted. Playful and frenetic, it seems to show an affinity with the French impressionists. The third movement, a very romantic *Adagio*, was subtitled *Romance*. The finale, *Allegro deciso*, Atterberg subtitled *Rondo*, intending it apparently to have a dance-like feel. The effect created is one of motion, a kind of restless traveling music. Another work which deserves concert performance and attention by amateur groups.



The name Aulin, at least among Swedish violinists, is still well-known. Tor Aulin is generally considered to be one of the greatest Swedish violinists of the last half of the 19th Century. Additionally, the Aulin String Quartet was the premier Swedish chamber ensemble for nearly 25 years. **Valborg Aulin** (1860-1928) was Tor's older sister. She began as a pianist but went on to formally study composition between 1877-82 at the Royal Academy in Stockholm where her teachers included Hermann Berens and Ludwig Norman. Scholarships enabled her to travel to Copenhagen and Paris where she was able to study with Niels Gade, Benjamin Goddard and Jules Massenet. After completing her studies, she embarked upon a composing career based in Stockholm for the next twenty years during which she initially has some small critical success but ultimately had less and less as time went on. Finally, she gave up in defeat and moved to the provincial city of Örebro where she spent the rest of her life eking out a living as a music teacher. She wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major dates from 1884. The somewhat lengthy first movement, *Allegro con grazia* is both lyrical and romantic. The second movement, *Intermezzo, Allegro con spirito e capriccioso*, is a very original sounding scherzo although the themes are not particularly memorable. The *Andante espressivo* though attractive, also seems to suffer from themes which are not particularly striking. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, is full of *giocoso* sawing. The part-writing is good, but the thematic material does not justify the energy spent on it. It is a decent work but pedestrian nature of the thematic material prevents the music from embedding itself into the memory.

String Quartet No.2 in e minor dates from 1889. The exciting opening *Allegro appassionato* is quite powerful and effective. It is better focused than any of the movements of the prior work. A dark and elegiac *Andante con moto* follows but the emotional content of the themes does not justify its great length. The *Allegro con spirito*, *Trio alla burla* is a more interesting movement. The trio, much of it played in the lower registers, is especially striking and forward-looking tonally. In the finale *Presto*, Aulin has at last chosen a fetching melody which gives the movement real memorability. This work may be worth reviving in concert and can be recommended to amateurs.



If **Arno Babajanian** (1921-1983) is an unfamiliar name in the West, he is a national hero in his native Armenia and quite well known in Russia. Babajanian was born in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. By age 5, Babajanian's extraordinary musical talent was clearly apparent, and the composer Aram Khachaturian suggested that the boy be given proper music training. Two years later, in 1928 at the age of 7, Babajanian entered the Yerevan Conservatory. In 1938, he continued his studies in Moscow with Vissarion Shebalin. He later returned to Yerevan, where from 1950-1956 he

taught at the conservatory. In 1971, he was named a People's Artist of the Soviet Union. As a composer, Babajanian was active in most genres and even wrote many popular songs in collaboration with the leading poets such as Yevgeni Yevtushenko and Robert Rozhdestvensky among others. Much of Babajanian's music is rooted in Armenian folk music and folklore. But generally, the way in which he uses Armenian folk music is in the virtuosic style of Rachmaninov and Khachaturian. His later works were influenced by Prokofiev and Bartók.

Arno Babajanian's **String Quartet No.3** (Nos.1 and 2 were never published), subtitled In Memory of Dmitri Shostakovich, was composed in 1976, shortly after his friend's death. It was his last major work. In it, one can hear his use of Shostakovich's famous D, Es (E flat), C, H motif as a tribute. It is in one movement of several sections. Though extremely modern sounding, Babajanian does use some elements of Armenian folk music, such as traditional funereal harmonies and the Voxber, a kind of cry out. To those familiar with his award winning Piano Trio from 1952, this quartet will come as a shock for it is nothing like it. It is too difficult for amateurs and rather unpleasant to hear, but perhaps some will find it worth exploring.



Grazyna Bacewicz (1909-1969) was born in Lodz (then in Russia) and began music studies at five. She studied violin, piano and composition at the Warsaw Conservatory. She became a member of an association called "Mlada Polska" (Young Poland) which encouraged Polish music students to study abroad and embrace international trends. Bacewicz went to Paris where she studied composition with Nadia Boulanger and violin with Carl Flesch. She pursued a career as a teacher serving as a professor of composition in the Lodz Conservatory. She wrote seven string quartets. They are not often played or performed at least in the West. They span the period from the 1930s to a few years before her death in 1969 and range from the post French Impressionism of her teacher Nadia Boulanger to the avant-garde which has become fashionable even in Eastern Europe by the 1960s. These works are beyond amateur players and perhaps some professionals. Other than her first quartet, audiences are unlikely to acquire what is certainly an acquired taste.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) did not write string quartets, however, many arrangements for string quartet of various works have been made. For those interested, the arrangements of his Brandenburg Concerti and Double Concerto for two violins are particularly effective.



Pierre Baillot (1771-1842) was born in the town of Passy just outside of Paris. After studying with the Italian violin virtuoso Giovanni Battista Viotti, he became one of the most important violin virtuosos of the late 18th and early 19th century. He was an outstanding soloist, violinist to Napoleon with whom he often travelled, concertmaster of the Paris Opera and an eminent chamber music player. His writings on violin technique are among

the most important ever written. In 1823, he composed **Three String Quartets, Op.34**. Each of his quartets is in the four-movement classical model. The opening allegros tend to be in the symphonic overture style, with lots of rapid dynamic and mood contrasts and syncopated accompaniments. The Spanish minuet of String Quartet No.1 is the most interesting movement of the entire set. Only the first violin part, no surprise, is demanding.

Rather ordinary fare only of interest because a great violinist wrote them.



Edgar Bainton (1880-1956) was born in London and trained as a pianist. He attended the Royal College of Music and studied composition with Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. Only 21, Bainton became piano professor at the Newcastle upon Tyne Conservatory of Music and was its director by 1912. While attending the Bayreuth Festival in 1914, war broke out and he was interned near Berlin for the next four years.

After returning to England, in 1934, he relocated to Australia to become director of the New South Wales Conservatory. His **String Quartet in A Major** was composed in 1915, while he was interned in Germany, and revised in 1920. The opening movement *Poco moderato con grazia* is pastoral and optimistic in nature, perhaps representing reflections on the English countryside. The opening theme makes appearances in both the third and fourth movements as well. The second movement, *Scherzo poco vivace*, is relatively short, upbeat and gently playful. In the third movement *Non troppo lento*, the muting of the strings heightens the pastoral and lyrical nature of the music. A *scherzando* middle section, played without mutes, is in the form of a country dance. The finale was composed in 1920 and sounds rather more modern than the preceding movements. Still tonal, it exhibits all of the trends Bainton must have found when he returned to England. Thought this could not be called a great work, it is solid, appealing and well-written.



Samuel Barber (1910-1981) though well-known, at least in the United States, is one of those unfortunately composers who is known for only one piece, his *Adagio for Strings* for string orchestra. But it was originally part of the second movement to his only **String Quartet, Op.11**. It was composed in 1935-1936 while Barber was living in the Austrian village of St Wolfgang not far from Salzburg. The quartet is almost never performed and

other than the first part of the emotive second movement, it is doubtful that any one could hum a tune from the rest of the quartet. The first movement, *Molto allegro e appassionato*, is characterized more by its rhythm than any memorable melody. It is at times nervous and searching. The second movement, *Molto adagio; molto allegro*, begins with a melody which has become famous. It is a slow, sensitive cantilena. The second half of the movement, *Molto allegro*, originally intended to be the last movement, is a rather unexciting and perfunctory recapitulation of first-movement material and in no small part is probably why this quartet is never performed. While not easy to play, it can be managed by experienced amateurs.



Otto Barblan (1860-1943) was born in the tiny Swiss village of Oberengadine. He first studied organ with his father a church organist and then piano and composition Stuttgart Conservatory with teachers who were under the influence of Wagner. He worked mostly as an organist in Geneva and also a professor at the Geneva Conservatory. His compositions were mostly for organ, however, he did write a piano trio and a string quartet. His **String Quartet in D Major, Op.19** dates from 1911 and dedicated to a prominent minister Adolphe des Gouttes in Geneva. The quartet is an unlikely combination of elements of Brahms, Bruckner and Wagner with Swiss patriotic and religious folk music. The opening beautiful

Allegro ma non troppo bears the inscription to the players in Italian *con serenita e con gioja*—with serenity and joy, and this is truly a lovely movement. The second movement, Andante, is a theme and set of ten variations. Barblan lets the players know that the theme is a *Gesang des Totenvolkes aus dem Festspiel zur Calvenfeuer*. Song of the dead taken from the festival celebrating the victory of the Swiss Confederation over the Habsburgs in the Swabian War of 1499. It is essentially a song celebrating Swiss independence. The words to the opening verse to the song are written below the first violin part, translated as *At the roads edge was a body lying awake in the field. We will bring you home you tired freedom fighter*. Barblan originally set it for choir and orchestra. As might be expected the melody, though in its way grim, is nonetheless stirring and the variations which follow are interesting. The third movement, Intermezzo, *allegretto giojoso*, begins with a two bar Andante introduction in d minor, but the *Allegretto* which comprises the rest of the movement is in D Major, essentially a serenade for the first violin. The finale is an energetic march-like *Allegro vivace*. This is a good quartet, though certainly not a masterpiece, it deserves an occasional concert outing perhaps and can be recommended to amateurs.



The initial opportunities which led to the success and recognition **Woldemar Bargiel** (1828-97) enjoyed during his lifetime were in large part due to the fact that he was Clara Schumann's half brother. Bargiel's father Adolph was a well-known piano and voice teacher while his mother Mariane had been unhappily married to Clara's father, Friedrich Wieck. Clara was nine years older than Woldemar. Throughout their lives, they enjoyed a warm relationship. Bargiel received his first lessons at home and later

with the well-known Berlin teacher of music theory, Siegfried Dehn. Thanks to Clara, Bargiel was introduced to both Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn. Upon the suggestion of the former and the recommendation of the latter, Bargiel at age 16 went to study at the famous Leipzig Conservatory with two of the leading men of music: Ignaz Moscheles for piano and Niels Gade for composition. After leaving Leipzig in 1850, he returned to Berlin where he tried to make ends meet by giving private lessons. Eventually, Clara and Robert were able to arrange for the publication of some of his early works. Subsequently, Bargiel held positions at the conservatories in Cologne and Rotterdam before accepting a position at the prestigious Hochschule für Musik in Berlin where he taught for the rest of his life. Among his many students were Paul Juon and Leopold Godowsky. Besides teaching and composing, Bargiel served with Brahms as co-editor of the complete editions of Schumann's and Chopin's works. While Bargiel did not write a lot of music, most of what he composed was well thought out and shows solid musical craftsmanship. His chamber music—he wrote four string quartets, a string octet and three piano trios—represents an important part of his output. His first two string quartets were never published.

String Quartet No.3 in a minor, Op.15b was composed in 1850 but remained unpublished until 1877. It was dedicated to Emmanuel Wirth, violist of the Joachim Quartet of Berlin. It is a fairly concise work in four movements. The opening *Allegro ma non troppo* has a lyrical Mendelssohnian theme filled with yearning. The main section of the second movement *Allegretto commo*do is characterized more by its thrusting rhythm which is rather threadbare. However, the trio section has an appealing melody given out alone by the first violin over pizzicato accompaniment. The *Adagio* which follows is romantic and mostly calm, but the thematic material is not particularly memorable. The finale, *Vivace ed energico*, is energetic and full of bustle but not especially strong in the area of melody. It is not hard to play but I do not

think it belongs in the concert hall although amateurs might give it a whirl.

String Quartet No.4 in d minor, Op.47 came nearly four decades after No.3. It dates from 1888. It shows that Bargiel had moved along, as one might have hoped after 40 years, as it is not infused with the perfume of Schumann and Mendelssohn. Though still very romantic, it shows that he had been influenced to some extent by the late quartets of Beethoven. Refreshingly, there is nothing of Brahms which one so often finds in the works of other composers writing in the 1880s. The opening movement, *Molto moderato ma passionato*, oscillates between lyrical and dramatic turbulence. The second movement, Andante, has a warm, valedictory melody for its main theme. Here the influence of late Beethoven is evident. The third movement, *Allegro energico, impetuoso*, serves as scherzo and is mostly dominated by its rhythm. The execution is so good that, one does not mind the absence of fetching melody, as in similar Beethovenian movements. The main subject, based on a triplet figure, of the finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is passed from voice to voice, rather quietly. It approaches a question and answer character. Though not particularly pretty, it holds one's attention. Slowly, perhaps too slowly, drama and excitement are built up. However, the repeated use of the triplet figure become rather tedious. Up until the finale, I would have said this is an first rate quartet without question. Unfortunately, the finale, in my opinion, drags it down somewhat. It can certainly be recommended to amateurs as it is not hard to play and on the whole enjoyable. I do not know if deserves a concert hearing but I can say it does not belong in the repertoire.



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

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

String Quartet No.2, Op.8 appeared in 1894. This quartet can also be recommended for concert performance and to amateurs as well since it is not terribly difficult from a technical standpoint. The first movement, *Allegro appassionato*, begins rather like a prelude. The main subject is full of energy while a second is more lyrical. A warm, deeply felt melody serves as the main theme of the second movement, *Adagio molto*. A rather original sounding and agitated middle section serves as contrast. The *Pres-to ma deciso* which comes next is fleet and sections of it are rather like an elvish dance. The finale, *Allegro assai ed appassionato* is interesting and effective

John Francis Barnett (1837-1916) was the son of a music professor and his first music lessons were from his parents. He won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied with Cipriani Potter and William Sterndale Bennett. Upon the recommendation of Bennett, a friend of Mendelssohn, Barnett



continued his studies at the Leipzig Conservatory with Moritz Hauptmann, Julius Rietz and Ignaz Moscheles, Mendelssohn's piano teacher. He subsequently pursued a career as a concert pianist, composer and became Professor of Music at the Royal College and Guildhall music schools. His three chamber music works, this quartet, a string quintet and a piano trio, date from early in his career. His **String Quartet in d minor, Op.8** was published in

1860 around the time he was studying at the Leipzig Conservatory, which had been founded by Mendelssohn. Only a dozen years after his death, the professors, who had been appointed by Mendelssohn not surprisingly both him and Schumann as paragons to be emulated. And virtually all of the students that studied there during this period could not entirely escape this influence. The work opens with a genial Allegro. The charming second movement, Andante con moto, begins with a brief pizzicato introduction before the song-like main theme is brought forth. Next comes a bouncy Scherzo, molto allegro vivace with a contrasting languid trio section. The finale, Molto allegro, begins with a turbulent introduction, but the main section is quite jolly. This is a work which deserves concert performance, but it is nicely written with appealing melodies and fun to play and as such can be recommended to amateurs looking for a mid Victorian era work.



Richard Barth (1850-1923) was born in the German town of Grosswansleben. From 1863 to 1867 studied with violin at the Hochschule fur Musik in Berlin with Joseph Joachim, renowned soloist and leader of the famous Joachim String Quartet. Barth achieved some degree of notoriety because he used his left hand for bowing and his right hand for fingering and so played the violin "in reverse." Nonetheless, he was successful

served as a concertmaster in several orchestras. He also led his own string quartet. His **String Quartet in g minor, Op.15** appeared in 1901. The thematic material of the opening Allegro espressivo are compelling, however, the development section is quite complicated and difficult to put together. The second movement, Adagio un poco rubato e con molto espressivo, might well be a tribute to Robert Schumann whose influence can easily be heard. A charming Intermezzo comes third. The fleet finale, Allegro, is filled with fetching themes and makes a suitable conclusion to a good work which deserves concert performance and can also be recommended to amateurs.

The Hungarian composer **Bela Bartok** (1881-1945) is generally considered one of the most important from the first half of the 20th century. His six string quartets are frequently programmed and have been recorded often. Whole books have been written about his quartets and there is nothing I can add. His name is included here in this guide merely for the sake of completeness.



Vasily (Vasyl) Barvinsky (1888-1963) was born in the Ukrainian city of Ternopil (then known as Tarnopol and part of the Austrian-Habsburg Empire). He studied piano, and composition at the Lyiv Conservatory and afterward in Prague with Vizeslav Novak. He pursued a career as a composer and teacher, eventually becoming a professor at the Lyiv Conservatory. His music, occasionally shows the influence of Impressionism, but often relies on Ukrainian folk melodies. Minimal-

ism also attracted him. He was not a prolific composer and chamber music is not a large part of his oeuvre. Barvinsky's **String**

Quartet in g minor was composed in 1941. It is in four movements and the themes in all of the movements are related. The opening movement is a theme and set of three variations. The theme is presented as a Lento and is taken from a famous Ukrainian folk melody. The first variation continues in the same tempo, the next is an Allegretto. The third variation, Andante, is the longest and has several different tempo and mood changes. The second movement is a short, light hearted Scherzo. It has no trio section. Third is an Andante, clearly based on a folk melody which resembles the main theme of the first movement. The rousing finale is a boisterous, rustic dance. This is an appealing work which can serve as a shorter concert program choice but can also be warmly recommended to amateurs.



Arnold Bax (1883-1953) was born in London. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music. Of independent means, he never needed to teach or conduct. He was a fine pianist but his main interests were composing music and poetry. His strong affinity for Ireland led him to spend considerable time in that country which influenced his outlook and music. The 1916 Easter Uprising in Ireland and its brutal suppression,

which included the execution of several of his friends, was to have a profound influence upon him. He is remembered mostly for his orchestral compositions but he wrote a great deal of chamber music which shows diverse influences, perhaps the strongest of which is impressionism.

He wrote two strings in 1902 and 1903 which predate his **String Quartet No.1 in G Major** which was completed in 1918 and is in three movements. The opening theme to the upbeat first movement, Allegretto semplice, sounds a little like Dvorak but soon we hear the music of the music of the English countryside. Ingratating and appealing, the tonal quality of the melody is clearly more modern. The calm middle movement, Lento e molto espressivo, is warm and rather romantic. The finale, Rondo, allegro vivace, has the quality of a rustic country dance, full of energy and good spirits. This is a very good work, deserving concert performance where it will be well received. It is in no way beyond amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major dates from 1925, It is a very different work. The opening Allegro begins with a long unaccompanied solo in the cello. Eventually the other instruments enter. It is thrusting, edgy and occasionally folkloric. The second movement, Lento molto espressivo, is dark and mournful. The finale, Allegro vivace, is a wild, furious dance-like affair which in the middle lapses into French impressionism and then dives into a dark soft funereal affair before the opening mood reappears. Not immediately as appealing as the first quartet, it is strong enough to be heard in concert, but beyond all but the most experienced amateur players. His final effort,

String Quartet No.3 in F Major was finished in 1936. It is a big, lengthy work. The opening Allegro might be styled neo-French Impressionist. There is nothing folkloric or Irish about it. The Poco lento which comes next has a chorale-like opening sung by all of the voices. Soon there is a lengthy and dramatic viola solo before things quiet down. The music conjures images of dark, stagnant pools interspersed with outbursts of desperation. It is engaging and interesting to be sure. The third movement, Scherzo, is nervous and edgy. If you were in a room with music, you would want to get out before something unpleasant happened. The trio section, though slower and more flowing, does not entirely relieve the tension. The finale, Allegro, does show some elements of folk tune presented in an upbeat and thrusting way. Powerful and deserving of concert, the quartet can be navigated by good amateur players.



Antonio Bazzini (1818-1897) is that rare example of a complete musician. A concert virtuoso who at the height of his career in the mid 19th century was regarded as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, violinist before the public. Yet, he gave up his concert career to devote himself to composing, teaching and above all to restoring the instrumental tradition, then in decline, in his native Italy. For several decades Bazzini,

who was a fine conductor, devoted himself to introducing the masterpieces of the Austrian and German repertoire to Italian audiences. Sadly, today Bazzini is only remembered as the composer of the fiendishly difficult encore piece, *Ronde des Lutins* (Dance of the Goblins). Yet, in his time, Bazzini's chamber music and his operas were greatly esteemed. Bazzini was born in the northern Italian city of Brescia. He was seven and a half when he began to study the violin with the local Kapellmeister. In 1836, Paganini heard the 19 year old Bazzini in a chamber music concert and advised him to tour as a virtuoso. Beginning in 1837 he toured Milan, Venice, Trieste, Vienna, and Budapest. Between 1841 and 1845 he toured Germany, Denmark, and Poland. For several years he lived in Leipzig, where he studied the German masters. There, Robert Schumann got to know and hear him often who called the best musician among violin virtuosos. In 1849–1850 he toured Spain and from 1852 to 1863 lived in Paris. His famous *Ronde des Lutins* was published around this time and immediately entered the repertoire as a show piece. In 1864 he decided to put his concert career aside in favor of composing and returned to Italy. Although not always homogeneous, Bazzini's works represent an important link between early and late 19th century Italian instrumental writing. The direct results of his efforts to make Italians aware of the great German and Austrian masterpieces, then virtually unknown in Italy. In 1861, the Societa del Quartetto of Florence was formed; and in 1864 a similar organization in Milan. Bazzini took an active role in both societies, often performing the quartets of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann. Some of his works were written as a result of competitions held by these societies or by Italian music publishers to reward the best instrumental compositions by Italian authors. The works that Bazzini wrote from the early 1860's on, when he had practically retired from concert activity, had a dual aim: First to show that he was au courant with international musical trends and second to help educate Italian audiences who were unfamiliar with the tradition of chamber music. In letters to friends and to the publisher Ricordi, Bazzini clearly states his intention as a composer was to create two separate sets of chamber music works. One would be ambitious works, complex of form and making greater instrumental demands. The other would consist of *Morceaux fantastiques*, *Morceaux lyriques* and *Morceaux caracteristiques* for violin and piano, aimed at skilled, progressive amateurs. His six string quartets belong to the first category. The quartets were composed over a span of almost thirty years, between 1864 and 1892, and show significant changes in the composer's musical outlook.

String Quartet No. 1 in C Major won the competition announced by the Societa del Quartetto of Milan in 1864. The work opens with a noble and austere *Adagio-Allegro*. The pensive *Andante sostenuto* following it call to mind Beethoven because of the use of the thematic material. The third movement, a *Scherzo*, clearly owes something to its Mendelssohnian predecessors, while the *Finale* hides its relatively poor inspiration behind skilful contrapuntal writing. This is a work which can be recommended for amateurs but not concert performance.

Completed around 1877, **String Quartet No. 2 in d minor Op. 75** was dedicated to the Societa del Quartetto of Florence. It opens with a dramatic and vibrant *Allegro appassionato*, tensely expressive. The second movement, *Andante con moto*, is melan-

cholic and imbued with intense lyricism, a Mendelssohnian song without words. In place of the usual *Scherzo*, a lovely *Gavotte*, *Allegretto*, serves as a third movement. Witty and lively, it became fairly popular as a piece in itself and was even published as an arrangement for piano. The quartet ends with a vigorous and virtuoso *Quasi Presto*. This quartet is strong enough for the concert hall, not at all hard to play and can be warmly recommended to amateurs.

The **String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major Op. 76**, composed approximately one year later in 1878, reveals a more modern, almost Brahmsian, tonality which is especially noticeable in the beautiful first movement which begins with a long, slow introduction, *Molto sostenuto*. This in turn leads to the main section *Allegro vivo*, which is full of élan and has melodically attractive themes. The second movement, *Minuetto, Allegro giusto*, is in the classical tradition. It begins energetically, but is at times lyrical and tender. The third movement, *Andante quasi allegretto--Allegro impetuoso*, is clearly the center of gravity of this quartet. The sad, lilting opening theme is followed by a more subdued *musette* and then a set of excellently contrasting and effective variations. The exciting finale, *Vivacissimo*, is full of energy and forward motion, its pressing rhythmic writing shows the influence of Schumann. This is a first rate work, good for concert and home.

About ten years separate the third quartet from **String Quartet No.4 in G Major Op.79**, the autograph of which is kept in the archives of the Societa dei Quartetti di Brescia and is dated Padua 1888. Compared to *String Quartet No.3*, this quartet is austere and constrained. It does not show the same dramatic melodic content as his earlier works. The opening theme of the first movement, *Allegro giusto*, though genial, is not particularly inspired. The second movement, *Lento*, begins with a lengthy violin recitative which appears to augur something significant, however, the main movement, *Andante con moto*, is disappointing, rather lightweight, almost trite. This is followed by a *Tempo di Gavotta*, which though lively, perhaps cute, borders on the banal. It is only in the finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, which shows considerable vigor, that Bazzini hits his stride. The first theme is dramatic and holds the listener's attention but same cannot be said of the second which quickly follows. Good enough for amateurs but not strong enough to be revived in concert.

String Quartet No. 5 in c minor Op. 80, composed between 1888 and 1892, opens with a beautiful *Allegro appassionato* imbued with romantic feeling and yet tempered by a sort of expressive reserve, typical of the best Bazzini. There are some moments of what seems like needless sawing, or even filler, but on the whole, they do not detract from the overall beauty of the music. The *Andante*, with its intense lyricism, absorbed and sorrowful, is one of Bazzini's best slow movements. The *Intermezzo*, which follows, is clever and light hearted. Not quite a *Scherzo*, it is livelier than a typical *intermezzo*. Here Bazzini's light touch is almost magical. The finale, *Allegro agitato-Vivace con fuoco*, is perhaps what might be called a typical Bazzini finale—it begins in dramatic fashion and then followed by a fugue is begun, deftly handled and effective. Only later does the music lighten a bit. Good for amateurs but I do not think it is strong enough for concert.

Bazzini's last quartet, **String Quartet No. 6 in F Major Op. 82**, was also composed in 1892 and his last work with opus number, although it appears in none of the standard reference sources although it is listed on Wikipedia and was recorded as part of a complete set of his quartets back in 2002. It is hard to categorize. In part, Bazzini seems to have taken a step backward looking to the works of Haydn and Mozart, although the music sounds nothing like them. The polished and classical writing of the initial *Allegro* is quite lovely but there is no real sense of drama or excitement. It is charming but not memorable. The following *Andante espressivo*, is quite lyrical and is infused with an Italian

vocal quality. Again, though charming and sweet and certainly effectively written, it really leaves no lasting impression. However, the third movement, Saltarello, vivacissimo, is not guilty of this. It is a fleet-footed affair, quite Italian in inspiration and original-sounding. Excellent with a slight Mendelssohnian tinge. The middle section is a more subdued intermezzo which appeals by virtue of its slinky syncopated melody. The finale, Allegro energico, is robust and roughly rhythmic with an attempt to create a dramatic aura. However, because the thematic material is simply not up to it and despite Bazzini's best attempts through the use of dynamics, rhythm etc., it can only be judged good but not great.



Ignaz von Beeck (1733-1803) was born in the German town of Wimpfen, then part of the grand duchy of Baden. He received piano lessons as a boy and though extraordinarily talented on the instrument, entered ducal regiment and initially pursued a career as a soldier, rising to the rank of Major. However, his talent as a pianist soon caught the eye of the head of the regiment, Count Gottingen-Wallerstein, who appointed

Beecke music director of his court. His talent as pianist was much hailed and contemporaries found him to be the equal of Mozart when it came to playing the piano. He is thought to have studied composition with Gluck. Beecke as a composer was largely self-taught. He was on friendly terms with most of the important musicians of his day, including Haydn, with whom he was almost an exact contemporary, Dittersdorf and Mozart, with whom he gave dual piano concerts. Like most composers of this era, he was prolific, leaving hundreds of works, including 33 symphonies and 17 string quartets. One or two have received modern editions including his **String Quartet in G Major, M9**. Beecke's works have only recently catalogued by Friedrich Munter. According to Munter this was Beecke's ninth composition. It dates from sometime in the 1750's. As such, the style is early classical, as characterized by the Mannheim School of Johann and Karl Stamitz. However, it is in four movements rather than the three which was typical of the Mannheim composers. The opening Allegro moderato is genial and pleasant. The part-writing is surprisingly even handed for this period. Naturally, the first violin is the leader, but the lower voices are not ignored. The Adagio which follows is particularly fine and has a tinge of the Baroque to it. The Menuetto which follows is typical for the period, but the trio is original and fresh. An energetic Presto completes the work. The quartet can not be considered a great work but it is historically important as a representative of the early classical era. Not difficult to play and can be recommended to amateurs.

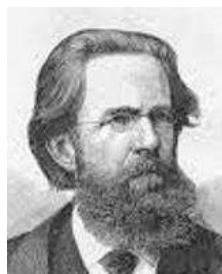


Anton Beer-Walbrunn (1864-1929) was born in the German town of Kohlberg. He studied composition at the Munich Academy of Music with Joseph Rheinberger. He himself became a professor there. Carl Orff and Wilhelm Furtwangler were among his many students. He wrote five string quartets. The first two were never, to the best of my knowledge published. String Quartet No.3 in G Major, Op.14 appeared in 1898. It is in three movements. The

opening movement, simply entitled Schnell begins with a subject in which the composer seems more intent on demonstrating his compositional technique, which it must be admitted is impressive. The second subject is better than the first which suffers from the technical display. The impressive middle movement, Einleitung, Sehr langsam, Andante is a charming set of variations on the well-known German folk song Es waren zwei Konigskinder. The lively and effective finale is in two parts, Scherzo, lebhaft

and Nicht zu rasch. The work is strong enough for the concert hall and can be recommended to experienced amateurs.

The sixteen string quartets of **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770-1827) along with those of Haydn, Mozart and Brahms are the most famous ever written. Whole libraries could be filled with the books written about them. They are generally grouped into three periods, the so-called six Op.18 Early Quartets of 1800. The Middle Quartets, Opp. 59 Nos.1-3, 74 and 95 and the Late Quartets Opp.127, 130-133 and 135. Certainly, they should be played before exploring any work listed here. But there is nothing more for me to say.



Gyula Beliczay (1835-1893), sometimes known as Julius in German and English speaking countries, was born in the Hungarian town of Révkomárom (now in Slovakia on the Danubian border between Hungary and Slovakia). He studied engineering and music in Pressburg and Vienna. He pursued a dual career serving as chief engineer in the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Communications. He studied

music at the same time he took his engineering degree, piano with Carl Czerny and composition with Martin Nottelbohm. His piano playing was admired by Liszt and Anton Rubinstein and his compositions were highly praised by contemporaries and performed all over Europe and even as far away as New York. He also was sought after conductor and composition teacher and after retiring from his government position, he served as director of the Budapest Academy of Music between 1888 and 1892. His music shows the influence of Schubert, Mendelssohn and Schumann but also of the Hungarian composers Mihaly Monsonyi and Ferenc Erkel. He wrote in most genres and numbers three string quartets, a piano trio, this nonet and several instrumental sonatas among his compositions.

His **String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.21** dates from 1878 and begins with a substantial, somber Adagio introduction. The main part of the first movement is a turbulent Allegro moderato. The second movement, an elegant Intermezzo, allegro grazioso, is at times stately, at others lyrical and wistful. Next comes a deeply felt Adagio interrupted by a contrasting, march-like middle section. The finale is an energetic Allegro risoluto. A solid work which can be warmly recommended to amateurs, it presents no technical problems.



Jan Levoslav Bella (1843-1936), for the first 76 years of his life was an Austrian, he spent his last 17 as a Czechoslovak, and today, he is posthumously a proud son of the Slovak Republic. He was born in the small town of Liptovsky St. Mikulas in what was then the Habsburg Empire. He studied both music and theology locally and was ordained as a priest in 1866. He then traveled widely in Germany where he was influenced by the music of

Schumann and Liszt. In 1881, he left the priesthood and married, taking a position as City Music Director (Stadtskapellmeister) in Hermannstadt (now Sibiu, Romania), a town with a sizeable German population in what was then part of the Hapsburg Empire or Austria-Hungary. He held this position until he retired in 1921. Although, he is virtually unknown today, he was well-known and on friendly terms with many prominent musicians such as Richard Strauss, Liszt, Brahms, and Ernst von Dohnanyi, whose works he championed and performed. Though the bulk of his compositions consist of choral music, he did not ignore chamber music, writing four string quartets, two of which were often performed by well-known ensembles, and also a viola quintet. It can

be said that Bella was attracted to the German neo-romantic school rather than the nationalism and dramatic naturalism of Smetana and Dvorak. His chamber music often shows the influence of Liszt. He wrote four string quartets.

His **String Quartet No.1 in g minor** dates from 1866 and is contemporaneous with Dvorak's earliest quartets and predates those of Brahms and Smetana. It was premiered at a concert with the famous Hungarian violin virtuoso Remenyi on first violin, Bella played the viola and the father of Ernst von Dohnanyi was on cello. Bella forgot about the work and did not hear it again until his 85th birthday in at a concert in 1928 when it was played in celebration of his birth. The opening movement, Grave allegro, begins with a short, deeply felt, somber introduction which leads to a yearning main section full of forward drive. The second movement, an impressive and gorgeous, funereal Adagio. The dance-like Scherzo allegro which comes next is a Central European relative of Schumannesque scherzo. The finale, Allegretto, has for its main subject a pleading theme which Bella quickly develops an energetic dance. This is the least known, if one can even say that since none are well-known, of Bella's quartets. It is a fine work, good for concert and also for amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in e minor, sometimes subtitled *The Hungarian*, dates from 1871 and, for the time, is really quite forward looking tonally, with many very original ideas. The opening Allegro risoluto, as the movement suggests begins quite resolutely with a thrusting theme containing some very intriguing chromatic tonalities. The second theme is gentler and more lyrical but closely related to the first. The main theme of the second movement, a big Adagio, is a deeply felt, religious melody. The development section features some very original and exotic-sounding episodes. Even more exotic and original is the main theme to the Allegro scherzando which comes next. This is followed up by a wonderful Hungarian folk-dance. The finale begins with a highly emotive and charged Largo con moto-Allegro maestoso. It, too, has an urgent, Hungarian sounding melody for its main theme. Slowly, Bella masterfully builds both tension and momentum as the tempo increases. This is a very original-sounding quartet that belongs in the front rank of string quartets, a pity it has not entered the repertoire. It is a masterwork.

Bella's **String Quartet No.3 in c minor** dates from 1876. It was championed by the famous Bohemian String Quartet, one of the foremost quartets then performing in Europe, and as a result became fairly well-known during the last decades of the 19th century right up until the First World War. The opening movement, a thrusting Allegro, almost sounds as if it is starting in the middle of a phrase with an energetic downward plunging subject. The second theme is gentler and more lyrical. A calm Andante with a noble melody comes next. The lovely second subject, sung in the violin and underpinned by the cello, is notable for its moving accompaniment in the middle voices. The main theme of the Scherzo, which serves as the third movement, is presented in lugubrious fashion by the viola and cello, giving the impression of a lumbering, heavy-footed dance, but the gorgeous melody which follows is ethereal. The finale opens with a very lengthy and mysterious Grave introduction which very slowly builds to the main section, a spritely and gay Allegro. Another first rate work which can qualify as a masterwork. It goes without saying that it should be performed in concert but can easily be played by amateurs. Bella, an amateur quartet player himself, took great pains to make his chamber music eminently playable.

String Quartet No.4 in B flat Major dates from 1887. The first theme of the opening Allegro molto is quite original both melodically and rhythmically. The longing and tender second theme does have a Slavic quality to it. The Andante sostenuto which follows begins in a dignified fashion and also seems to have this same longing and Slavic tinge. The unusual development breaks the theme apart though lighter rhythmic passages. The opening to the scherzo, Allegro, briefly quotes the main

theme of the opening movement before taking off into a lilting waltz. Yet, from time to time, this quote interrupts the proceedings. The trio section is consists of a lovely, gentle melody which provides fine contrast. The bright finale, Allegretto, begins in sprightly fashion with a catchy melody. The second subject is presented in canonic fashion, complete mastery of technique. It is quite original sounding, full of fresh melodies and is a very polished composition. An excellent work, also highly recommended.



Karel Bendl (1838-1897) was born in Prague and spent most of his life there. He was educated at the Prague Organ School where he met and befriended Dvorak one year before graduating with honors in 1858. After working in Prague for some years, primarily composing vocal works, Bendl was engaged in 1864 as a conductor and choir director in Brussels, then Amsterdam and finally Paris. In Paris, he became influenced by the stage works of Charles Gounod and Ambrose Thomas and especially by Giacomo Meyerbeer. By 1867 he was back in Prague and succeeded Smetana as conductor of an important Prague choral society. Eventually, he was drawn to the stage and spent nearly the rest of his life composing for the Czech opera, many of his operas achieved considerable success in Bohemia but like most Czech operas, including those of Dvorak, they were ignored by the all-important German opera world. Unlike Dvorak, Bendl, for the most part, shunned writing purely instrumental works and therefore was unable, as Dvorak had been, to attract a supporter like Brahms, without whom Dvorak would perhaps be as little known as Bendl. Except for three sonatas and one string quartet, Bendl wrote no chamber music. And he waited until near the end of his life to do it. A tremendous pity considering its high quality.

For the first two decades after its composition, his **String Quartet in F Major, Op.119** was regular fare on Czech and even German concert programs, but then, like so many other fine works, it disappeared without a trace. Completed in 1895, it was dedicated to the famous Bohemian String Quartet. In four movements, it opens with an beautiful and gentle Andante con moto introduction reminiscent of a sunrise--a Czech sunrise because already we hear the music of the Bohemian forests. The main theme to the following movement, Allegro moderato, is based on the introduction and is so pregnant with possibilities that it births all of the other themes to this gorgeous movement. Next comes a very lively and fresh, dance-like scherzo, Quasi presto. The trio section takes the form of a striking recitative in which the cello leads and viola responds. A big slow movement, marked Adagio non tanto follows. Then, it slows further to Adagio assai as Bendl produces an impressive requiem section. This funereal music never fails to make a very deep impression on those hearing it. The finale, Con fuoco, lives up to its title. Full of Bohemian fire, the opening theme races recklessly along carrying all before it. A more relaxed and lyrical middle section allows the players and listeners to catch their breath, before the return of the main theme which blazes forward to a powerful conclusion. This is a masterpiece on a level with those of Smetana and the best of Dvorak. It is full of wonderful Bohemian melodies, but it is not an imitation but is fresh-sounding and original.



Josef Benes (1795-1873), known his lifetime by the German form of his name, Bene-sch, was born in the Moravian town of Bate-lov, then part of the Habsburg Empire and now in the Czech Republic. He began to study the violin at an early age and was quickly recognized as a child prodigy. After moving to Vienna, he became one of the city's leading violinists and chamber musi-

cians, enjoying a career as a soloist and eventually succeeding Ignaz Schuppanzigh as K.u.K. court violinist and first violin of his string quartet. Benes also served as a music director both in Laibach (today's Lubjana) and Vienna. He not only composed several works for his own instrument but also came chamber music, including two string quartets. I am not familiar with his **String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.28** composed in 1865 and which was dedicated to Ferdinand Laub another Czech violin virtuoso, whom Tchaikovsky called the finest violinist he knew

Benes' **String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.30** was published in 1871 but most scholars believe it was composed during the late Biedermeier era, perhaps around 1840. In four movements, the opening *Allegro moderato* is warm and sunny, typical of the romantic style of the late Biedermeier. The *Allegro vivo scherzo* which follows is much in the same mood, pleasant and attractive. The third movement, *Poco adagio*, is darker and more serious. The finale, *Allegro*, is genial and upbeat. This is an attractive work, not hard to play, and a typical example of the chamber music of those Biedermeier composers who were producing true chamber music rather than vehicles merely to show off technique. Good for amateurs.

Josef Bengraf (1748-1791) was born in the Bavarian village of Neustadt an der Saale near Würzburg. After studying organ with his father, he moved to Budapest in 1776 and became a choir director at the Budapest Cathedral. Most of his works are religious and vocal, however he did write Six String Quartets bear no opus and it is unknown when they were composed although since the manuscripts were found in Hungary it is reasonable to assume they were written sometime after his arrival in 1776 and his death in 1791. All six have received modern editions and have been recorded, however, I cannot recommend them as they are at their best inferior to even the earliest Haydn quartets. I can only assume that they received this attention because of their historical interest being among the earliest quartets composed in Hungarian, but of course not by a Hungarian but by a German. I include them here only because of the fact that you might come across the modern editions.



Peter Benoit (1834-1901) was born in the small Flemish town of Harelbeke, he studied at the Brussels Conservatory with the well-known musical biographer, Fetis. He is sometimes called the Flemish Schubert because he devoted so much of his time to lieder or song and is credited as being the founder of a Flemish national school in musical composition. Some sources state that Benoit composed four string quartets, however, I have been unable to locate any information about all but his **String Quartet in D Major, Op.10** dates from 1858 and was written in Munich where Benoit was visiting as a result of his having won a stipendium from the Prix de Rome. The work remained unpublished until 1951 when it was brought out by the Royal Academy of Belgium commemorating the 50th anniversary of his death. It opens *Allegro anima e fuoco* although the writing does not allow the not particularly convincing music to be played either *anima* or *fuoco*. Clearly derivative, the composer seems to be searching around for himself using the language of the middle period of German Romanticism. Fortunately, Benoit finds himself in the clever Schumannesque *Scherzo presto* which follows. A beautiful but tragic-sounding *Larghetto* of considerable power comes next. It is in this movement that one hears how this composer was able to win the Prix de Rome. For its time, it is very good. A rather light-hearted *Allegro*, complete with a 6/8 chase theme reminiscent of Schubert, closes this slight but charming quartet. Good for amateurs but not, I think, strong enough for the concert hall.



Hermann Berens (1826-1880) was born in Hamburg and studied piano, violin and composition with Carl Gottlieb Reissiger who was the music director and chief conductor in Dresden. During this time, Reissiger employed Wagner as his second conductor. Although Berens undoubtedly got to know Wagner well, there is nothing of Wagner in Berens' music. Rather, Mendelssohn and Schumann served as his models. He spent most of his life in Sweden eventually becoming the director of a prominent Stockholm music drama theater and a professor at the Stockholm Conservatory. In addition to his chamber music, he wrote several operas in Swedish and a considerable amount of piano music. Besides the piano, Berens also was proficient on the violin. Berens' **String Quartet in e minor, Op.78** dates from 1866 and was dedicated to the Swedish composer Adolf Lindblad. The opening movement begins with a slow introduction which leads to the main section, *Allegro*, which is by turns energetic and then lyrical. The second movement is marked *Romanza, andante larghetto*. It has the quality of a Mendelssohnian song without words. Next comes a thrusting *Scherzo allegro* full of forward motion. The opening ominous chords to the finale, *Allegro con moto*, seem to quote Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but what follows is lyrical and full of sunshine. This is an appealing mid-romantic era quartet



Rudolph Bergh (1859-1924) not to be confused with his famous father Rudolph Bergh a physician and zoologist, was also trained as a zoologist and worked as a professor of zoology before switching to music. He studied with Heinrich von Herzogenberg in Berlin and later became a professor at the Royal Danish Conservatory. He was influenced by Brahms and Carl Nielsen. Bergh's **String Quartet in d minor, Op.10** which appeared in 1903 is a noteworthy work, written in true quartet style, cleverly put together. The first movement begins with a short *Adagio* introduction which leads to an *Allegro energico* which has for its main subject an acerbic and foreboding melody played over an insistent pulsating rhythm, but there is also a charming intermezzo interlude. The middle movement is an updated Mendelssohnian *Scherzo*. Although there is no slow movement, the finale has for its theme a slow, religious *Andante*. It is followed by 24 excellently contrasting variations, the last one being a superb fugue. The work presents no great technical problems.



Lennox Berkeley (1903-1989) was born in Oxford and graduated from Merton College, Oxford before going to France where he studied with Nadia Boulanger and Maurice Ravel. Besides pursuing a career as a composer, he taught at the Royal Academy of Music and worked for the BBC. He wrote three string quartets. And while he said that atonal music never appealed to him, his music is not traditionally tonal either.

String Quartet No.1, Op. 6 dates from 1935. It is in four movements—*Allegro moderato*, *Andante non troppo*, *Scherzo vivace* and *Theme and variations*. It is a searching, edgy work filled with dissonance. I do not know how much pleasure it would give to audiences and only very experienced amateurs will make any sense of it.

String Quartet No.2, Op.15 was composed in 1941 during WWII when things were not exactly looking bright for England. It is in three movements—*Allegro moderato*, *Lento* and *Allegro*. A somewhat softer work than his first quartet. Not traditionally

tonally but the dissonances are not as prominent. Berkeley's finale work in this genre,

String Quartet No.3, Op.76 dates from 1970. It is in four movements—Allegro moderato, Allegro vivace, Lento and Molto vivace. It is softer yet though in no way traditionally tonal. It is the easiest to listen to. It is not a work for amateurs.



Sometime during the 1850's, a German music critic is reputed to have asked **Franz Berwald** (1796-1868) if he was still a composer.

Berwald stared at him coldly and replied, "*No, I am a glass blower.*" When I first came across this remark, I thought that it was a joke, a sarcastic put-down of the critic by a bitter man whose music had been spurned in his own country and whose career in music had met with failure after failure. But no, upon doing the research for this guide, I learned that Berwald had in fact, at that time, actually been a glass blower! He had become involved with this successful business, and not his first, in order to make a living, something he could not do as a musician. Liszt, whom Berwald befriended in the 1850's, told him, "*You have true originality, but you will not be a success in your own lifetime.*" Sadly, this prediction proved true. Berwald's music remained unplayed and for the most part—especially in his native Sweden—unappreciated. But by the middle of the 20th century, Swedes were hailing him as their most original composer. Sweden aside, Berwald's music remains, for the most part, unknown. Born in Stockholm in 1796, Berwald was taught the violin by his father, a German who had settled in Sweden and was a member of the court orchestra. Following in his father's footsteps, Berwald joined the orchestra in 1812 and remained in it until 1828. It is thought he took composition lessons from the court conductor, Edouard Dupuy. He wrote three string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor dates from 1818. A substantial work, especially for this period, it is the longest of his three quartets. The first two measures of the opening movement, Allegro moderato, have a tonality which is already advanced for the time, although the rest of the phrase quickly falls back into conventional tonality. The part writing is generally quite good and Berwald makes telling use of the cello in its lower register to provide contrast. The music sounds original rather than derivative. Critics both at the time and since have commented on the unusual and abrupt modulations. Unfortunately the movement ends in somewhat trite fashion. The opening theme to the second movement, Poco adagio, is based on a folk melody which though pleasant is not particularly striking. The third movement, Scherzo, Allegro, is in my opinion the most unusual and original sounding of the Quartet. The robust main theme is advanced both rhythmically and tonally. While the trio section does provide adequate contrast, it must be admitted that the thematic material is somewhat lame, especially following, as it does, on the heels of the wonderful music of the scherzo, the ending to which is extremely effective. The finale, Allegretto, begins with a fairly conservative type of theme, harking back to the Viennese classics although twice, in a Berlioz-like explosion of energy, the writing loses its chamber music quality when the 1st violin breaks loose with a virtuoso triplet passage played at rocket speed. It sounds like some sort of lapse and does not particularly go with the rest. A third theme is noteworthy for its advanced tonality, sounding as if Schumann or a young Brahms might have written it and is ahead of its time while there are certain episodes of quirkiness, this quartet has a great deal to recommend it. It might be considered by those professional groups looking for a change. With a good 1st violinist, amateurs can manage it. None of his quartets were published during his lifetime. It was another 31 years before he returned to the genre.

The **String Quartet No.2 in a minor** of 1849 does not, despite the three decades of experience Berwald gained, show any real advance over the earlier work. If anything from a tonal standpoint, it is more conservative, however from a structural standpoint, it is quite unusual. A much shorter work than the First Quartet, all four movements to the Second are connected to each other and played without pause. In addition the succeeding movements begin with a definite thematic relationship to the music which has preceded it. The first movement begins with a melancholy, somewhat Schubertian, Introduzione, Adagio. This leads to an Allegro, the thematic material to which is rather pedestrian. Berwald almost seems aware of it and attempts to dress it up by the use of quirky rhythmic figures which have the same sort of artificiality that Berlioz's music sometimes has. This is not an accident, as Berwald was much attracted to the music of Berlioz. There is something about the part writing—hard to put into words but nonetheless something—which experienced quartet players will recognize as not traditional quartet-style writing. The second movement, Adagio, is separated from the first by only a brief pause (a fermata over a quarter note rest). The first subject is taken from the opening Introduzione but expanded upon and developed. Again the thematic material, though pleasant, is unremarkable and again Berwald tries to add some sort of originality by the use of odd rhythms which have an artificial quality to them. The Adagio leads, without any pause directly to a Scherzo, Allegro assai. The main theme is based on a triplet figure, and unfortunately cannot be said to be anything other than very ordinary. The most unusual thing is that there is no trio section. While the last note of the Scherzo is briefly held with a fermata, it leads seamlessly to the finale, Allegro molto, which begins drably because it lacks any contrast to the preceding movement. Happily, the music gets much better as it goes along because the thematic material is more inspired. The coda is well executed and satisfying, but on the whole, this is not as strong or appealing a work as No.1 because, with the exception of the 4th movement, the thematic material is not convincing, and the unusual rhythms seem more contrived than unique. It is as if the composer were attempting to direct the listener's attention away from the threadbare melodic writing. While technically less demanding than No.1, the first movement, in particular, presents some pretty substantial ensemble problems.

It is hard to believe that only one week separates the composition of **String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major** from No.2. Full of creative, original and unusual ideas, the Third Quartet does share one characteristic with the Second: There are no distinct pauses between the movements. The opening Allegro con brio immediately captures the listener's attention with a Berlioz-like burst of fury. Though not so marked, it is a short introduction and features three brief cadenzas, one for the 1st violin, one for the cello and a bridge passage to the main movement, Allegro di molto, played by the 2nd violin. The charming opening melody, sung by the 1st violin is both romantic and memorable. A stormy second subject is full of passion. Each voice is given an important part which does blend so much as stand alone, creating the impression that the writing is too dense. A calmer but quite romantic third theme follows. The fecundity of musical thought is almost too much for one movement. And here, unlike in the Second Quartet, the unusual and original rhythmic effects, such as snare-drum like 16th & 8th notes, only add to the excellence of the music. The following Adagio quasi Andante begins without any pause and opens with another extraordinarily romantic melody. In contrast, the second subject has some advanced tonalities. The part writing is good and the recapitulation has a fine pizzicato accompaniment. A tumultuous Scherzo, Allegro assai begins after 2 beats of rest. Sans trio section, it is the mere alternation of its two subjects. Nearly as long as the first movement, the Scherzo just dies away. What comes next is the preceding Adagio, fully restated. It, in turn, after a fermata note, leads to a shortened restatement of the

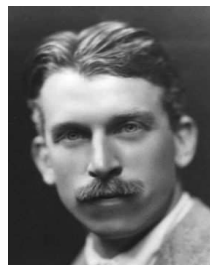
Allegro di molto from the 1st movement. Perhaps loud rather than a soft conclusion might have made the coda more effective but the *pp* conclusion also works as the music retreats from whence it came. Structurally, Berwald anticipated Bartok by 75 years! The music forms an arch, with the Scherzo as its point. This is an unusual and effective work suitable for both amateurs and public performance. Not technically difficult, it does pose a few ensemble problems.



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

During his lifetime, these works were much appreciated by professionals and amateurs alike and in 1862 he won the prestigious Chartier Chamber Music Prize. Besides the fact that his works are pleasing and deserving of performance, Blanc's historical importance cannot be underestimated. He was one of the very few in France trying to interest the public, then with only ears for opera, in chamber music. He paved the way for the success of the next generation of French composers. Unfortunately, most of his music has sunk into oblivion. His name is kept alive by one work, his Septet for winds and strings. He wrote four string quartets Opp. 16, 27, 38 and 53.

I am only familiar with **String Quartet No.3 in F Major, Op.38** which dates 1859. At this time, Mendelssohn and Schumann were the composers whose influence was most felt in Germany and England where the next generation emulated their compositions. However, Blanc's works show none of this. Instead, they build on the works of Onslow and even earlier French composers such as Hyacinth Jadin. In four movements, the Quartet begins with a short, diffident Andante maestoso introduction in which the main theme of the following Allegro ma non troppo can be heard. The theme begins in rather leisurely fashion but in short order quick scale passages increase the pace of things. The second movement, Andante, is an attractive melancholy march. Though not so marked, it is a theme and set of variations. Next comes a straight forward, classical Menuetto, Allegretto quasi andante. Of particular interest is the trio section in which the cello is given the lead in presenting the running triplet theme. The finale, an Allegro, has for its main theme a jaunty melody passed back and forth in snippets. Blanc wrote most of his music for the home music making market and this quartet can be recommended to amateurs but not for concert performance.



Arthur Bliss (1891-1975) was born in the London suburb of Barnes. He studied with Charles Wood and Edgar Elgar while attending Cambridge University and then at the Royal College of Music with Charles Villiers Stanford. He wrote four string quartets, two were written before his No.1 The first was the **String Quartet in A Major** from 1915. In three movements—Moderato ma tranquillo, Andante sostenuto and Allegro con grazia.

This is music of the English countryside with touches of French Impressionism. Somewhat similar to what Ireland and Vaughn Williams were writing at the time. It is tuneful, sweet but not compelling. It can be managed by amateurs without much problem. An occasional concert performance could be warranted. He wrote a second quartet in 1923 but I am not familiar with it.

His **String Quartet No.1 in B flat Major** dates from 1941. It opens with a dark Andante maestoso introduction which leads to the main section Allegro con brio. There is a certain urgency to it, perhaps reflecting the dark and dangerous times Britain was facing. It is dramatic and thrusting. The second movement, Allegretto grazioso wanders without any real cohesion. The third movement, Sostenuto, is by turns pastoral and mystical with some interesting tremolo interludes. The finale, Vivace, stands out from the rest not only because it is for the most part upbeat and with appealing themes, but also because there is real cohesion to the music. The excellence of this last movement makes it difficult for me to pass judgment. It can be managed by amateurs and again could be brought into concert.

String Quartet No.2 in f minor was composed in 1950. The opening Allegro con spirito is edgy and frenetic and dramatic. It holds the attention. Next comes a Sostenuto, dark, sludgy and with some dissonance though not uninteresting. This is followed a Vivo e con brio is a kind of wired scherzo. The big finale begins with a substantial Larghetto section, to big to be called an introduction, not at first terribly attractive but the lyrical second theme is rather good, sad and with a sense of resignation. It leads almost seamlessly to the Allegro. There is a certain appeal created between the theme and the accompanying rhythmic figure. This work deserves concert performance but is not a work for amateurs.



Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) was born in the Swiss city of Geneva. He studied violin and attended the Brussels Conservatory where he studied with the famous violinist Eugene Ysaÿe and then went to the Hochschule fur Musik in Frankfurt where he studied with Iwan Knorr. He emigrated to the United States in 1916 and divided his time between teaching and composing. He held positions at the Mannes

School of Music, the Cleveland Institute of Music and the San Francisco Conservatory. He wrote six string quartets and a number of other pieces for it as well.

In 1916 he composed what became **String Quartet No.1**. It is a massive work lasting nearly an hour. It was begun in Geneva and then completed in New York. Its four movements: a searching Andante moderato, a high strung Allegro frenetico, a funereal Andante molto moderato and a thrusting Vivace, bursting with emotion and desperation. It was written in what might be called a post Impressionist style. The music is for the most part polytonal, putatively in the key of b minor. Bloch wrote that he tried to express the sorry state that Europe, then in the middle WWI, was in. It is an interesting but not a happy work. Not for amateurs but certainly would make a powerful impression in the concert hall.

String Quartet No.2 was completed at the end of WWII in 1945. It has a sad Moderato to begin. It is followed sharp edged, wild and riveting Presto. The third movement, Andante, is depressed and haunting. The finale is in four parts. It opens with a furious Allegro molto which keeps you on the edge of your chair. It comes to an abrupt end and is followed by what Bloch marks Passacaglia but the music bears no resemblance to that other than it is slower. This is followed by a fugue and then an Epilogue which sounds like a trudging march of a defeated army. Again not for amateurs but good for concert.

String Quartet No.3 was composed in 1952. The opening Allegro deciso has a pounding rhythm but the thematic material is not as convincing as that of the preceding quartets although it is the rhythm that creates the mood. I could find nothing about the second movement, Adagio non troppo, to recommend it. An Allegro molto comes third and is in some ways the same as the opening movement, strong on rhythm and thin on thematic material. The music does create a sense of traveling, of forward move-

ment and is more interesting. The finale, *Allegro*, does not begin at that tempo, but slowly and mysteriously. However, it gives the sense that nothing is happening. After a while, Bloch introduces a fugue. All in all, it sounds as if he is at a loss of what to write. I cannot recommend this work for concert and it is beyond amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 was finished the following year in 1953. The opening *Tranquillo* creates a sense of nothing is happening, like a vacuum. Then suddenly a storm of sound explodes, but in the end it is much ado about little. The second movement, *Andante*, is sad in the way a wilted plant might look sad. It is not tragic. No one has died. The third movement, *Presto*, is characterized by the use of *pizzicato* and whirling chromaticism. There is a rather good, contrasting trio section. But the return of the *Presto* just reinforces the idea that Bloch had run out of ideas and was just making noise. The finale, begins *Calmo*. It could be polytonal white noise. The *Allegro deciso* is explosive, loud and of no import. The return of the *Calmo* is actually a relief. Not for concert and not for amateurs. I am not familiar with **String Quartet No.5** which he completed in 1956.

In 1924, while in Cleveland, Bloch wrote a two movement tone poem **In the Mountains**. The first movement entitled *Dusk*. It is mostly a quiet, rustling post Impressionist affair. The second movement, *Rustic Dance*, sounds just like what you might expect a peasant dance to sound like if peasants were dancing to such things in 1924. Not a great work but not a bad work. It could go into the concert hall and can be managed by amateurs. Also from the same period is a one movement work entitled **Night**. It is rather emotive and does a good job of creating a tonal sense of darkness. Good for concert and home.

The third work from this period is the three movement **Paysages** or Landscapes. The first movement entitled *North* was supposed to represent the Arctic and Bloch said was inspired by *Nanook of the North*, a silent film documentary. The second movement, *Alpestra*, was meant to represent the Swiss Alps. The finale movement *Tongataboo*, is the most impressive of the set. *Tongataboo* or *bu* is the largest island of the island kingdom of Tonga in the Pacific. Both *North* and *Alpestra* really do not convey much. In *North* there is a sense of silence, actually much the same as the alpine second movement. Having spent a fair amount of time in the Alps, I do not think the music very representative. But the wild and exotic dance of *Tangatabu* is exciting and compelling music. It would make a great encore. The last work for string quartet, also from his time in Cleveland is **Prelude**. It is a kind of dissonant meditation. I did not find it worthwhile returning to it.



Felix Blumenfeld (1863-1931) was born in the Russian-Polish town of Kovalevka in what is now Ukraine. He came from a musical family and quickly established himself as a piano virtuoso of the first rank. He attended the St. Petersburg Conservatory and studied composition with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and piano with Alexander Stein. Shortly after graduating, he obtained a teaching position there eventually becoming a Professor. He also enjoyed a career as a concert pianist and opera conductor and was associated with the premieres of several of Rimsky-Korsakov's operas. Between 1918 to 1922 he served as a Professor of Piano and Director of the Kiev Conservatory. Among his many students was Vladimir Horowitz. Today, he is primarily remembered for his first rate and beautiful compositions for piano which in terms of difficulty are often compared to those of Liszt.

The **String Quartet in F Major, Op.26** dates from 1898 and is Blumenfeld's only work in this genre. It won the First Prize of the St. Petersburg Chamber Music Society. The Quartet is certainly one of the very best written of the late Romantic Russian

Nationalist school. It is a beautiful work both pleasant to play and to hear. The opening movement, *Allegro*, begins with a gorgeous theme presented by the first violin and cello. This is followed up by an equally lovely second theme. Here, Blumenfeld conjures up the aura of both Borodin and Rimsky Korsakov. Next comes a very original Scherzo in which the Viola and Cello bring forth a dark and gloomy but rather insistent theme which is played over rushing 16th notes in the Violins. It is a wonderful moment when the lyrical second theme makes its appearance, like the sun suddenly breaking through storm clouds. The third movement, *Andantino*, begins with a long lyrical Viola solo. After its full statement the others take part in its development. The opening bars of the exciting finale, *Allegro molto*, with its fleet 16ths recalls the Scherzo while the second theme brings back thoughts of the opening movement. The slower second theme provides excellent contrast. It would be well received in concert and amateurs are sure to enjoying playing this tuneful work with no technical problems.



Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) was born in the town of Lucca in northern Italy. He studied cello and became a virtuoso. But it was at a time that such players could not yet make a living from touring, so Boccherini found jobs in various orchestras in Vienna and Italy. Boccherini eventually moved to Paris where he hoped to establish himself as an independent soloist and composer but could not and was forced to take

employment with the Spanish royal family for the rest of his life. Some of Boccherini's music is fairly well-known and heard in concerts, his string quartets are not among these. To some extent this is because they are not as interesting as his many string quintets the bulk of which are for two cellos rather than two violas which made them innovative. He wrote upwards of 50 string quartets, just how many is still the subject of debate. Most of his quartets have been recorded but you are unlikely to hear one played in concert. I will discuss three here and from this you will get some idea of what to expect.

Boccherini's **String Quartet in c minor, G.159**, according to most scholars is the first string quartet that he composed. (the G stands for Gerard who compiled the most complete catalogue of his many works. It was in 1761 that a set of six quartets were published variously as his Opus 2 or Opus 1. The opus number to Boccherini's works are both confusing and unreliable because different publishers would give the same work different opus numbers. It was only until they were catalogued by Yves Gérard that we now have an accurate chronological catalogue of his works. This quartet, the first of the set, along with the other five are the only quartets composed before Boccherini left Italy for Paris and hence are free from Parisian influence. It is in three movements, following the then normal fast--slow--fast pattern. (*Allegro commodo*, *Largo* and *Allegro*) These Op.2 quartets were, as the title page to the original edition shows, dedicated to "Amateurs and Connoisseurs of Music" and are a clear indication that Boccherini was hoping to gain the attention and approval of those musicians who counted. There are several touches which seem to show the influence of the Viennese composers Georg Monn and Franz Turna, probably from his stay in Vienna the previous year. Of particular note is the fact that the cello is a true equal of the other voices and is often given a chance to lead the ensemble, no doubt, because it was Boccherini's own instrument.

String Quartet in C Major, G.164 is the sixth of the above mentioned set. It is in three movements, breaking from the then typical pattern of fast--slow--fast pattern in that it substitutes a Minuetto for the final movement. The other two movements are *Allegro con spirito* and *Largo assai*.

String Quartet in D Major, G.177, was the first of a set of six quartets which date from 1772. They were simultaneously published in Paris and Amsterdam variously as his Opus 15 or Opus 1 and also Op.8 No.5. It is unusual in that it is only in two movements Presto and Rondo, lacking a slow movement. The Italian influence is no longer as prominent as in his earlier quartets, though still present, one hears elements of the then current French taste.



Alexandre Boëly (1785-1858) was clearly an extraordinary man who truly marched to his own drum beat. Such independence of thought and taste led to his losing a prestigious position as an organist in one of France's leading churches for championing the music of Bach. Today, Boëly is remembered as one of France's greatest organists from the first half of the 19th century. He was born at Versailles

into a family of musicians. He excelled on the organ and piano and most of his compositions are for these instruments. However, he did write five string trios and four string quartets, which are among his most interesting works. Boëly's four string quartets Op. 27, 28, 29 and 30 were published in 1859, a year after his death. Despite the fact that their publication was contemporary with that of the first quartets by Theodore Gouvy, Eduard Lalo, and Adolphe Blanc, they were actually composed between 1824 and 1827. This fact, in and of itself, led to them being instantly ignored because the publisher did not make it clear that the quartets had actually been composed some 35 years before. Hence they were regarded as outmoded or at best a historical curiosity. Although it is clear that Boëly looked to Haydn and Beethoven as his models, his works are original sounding.

String Quartet No.1 in a minor, Op.27 begins with a thrusting Allegro followed by a lovely lyrical subject. Next comes a Beethovenian romantic Andante. This is followed by a lively Scherzo. The finale, a substantial Rondo, recalls late Haydn. This is a historically important and very worthwhile work, with good part writing for all, and presenting no technical difficulties. It should be of interest to professionals looking for an alternative to late Haydn or early Beethoven and is sure to give pleasure to amateurs as well.

The opening movement to **String Quartet No.3 in G Major, Op.29**, Allegro ma non troppo, has for its main theme a syncopated Beethovenian figure of the sort found in his Op.18. The music moves forward in jerky fashion, starting and stopping without warning, creating an original and interesting effect. A sad, funereal Adagio follows. Deeply felt, the voices are treated in chorale fashion until appearance of a more lyrical second section. Next comes a Schubertian Scherzo in which the scherzo is rather gentle while the trio section is more dramatic. The finale, Rondo, allegro moderato, is restless and searching, full of forward motion. Again, this is another quartet that could be brought into the concert hall and should be of interest to amateurs. I am not familiar with Nos.1 and 4.



Joseph Bologne (circa 1745-1799) was born in Guadeloupe. His father Georges de Bologne de St. Georges was a wealthy French planter and a member of the nobility. His mother was an African slave. He was taken back to Paris with his father at age 7 and enrolled in elite schools and given lessons in fencing and violin along with his other subjects. He became a champion fencer, possibly the best in

France and certainly one of the best in Europe. His fame was such that he was invited to London where he met the Prince of Wales and several champion British fencers. As a result of his

exploits and because he was also part of the King's Bodyguard Regiment, the Louis XV allowed him to use the title Chevalier de St. Georges, which had been his father's. Not a lot is known about his musical training although it is thought he studied composition with Francois Joseph Gossec and violin possibly with Jean Marie Leclair or Pierre Gaviniès. During the 1770s and 1780s he was also considered one of the finest violinists in France serving as a concertmaster of leading orchestras, as a soloist and a conductor. He also composed, mostly works for the violin, but also 12 string quartets. He personally knew many of the leading composers of the day including Mozart. His **String Quartet No.4 in c minor, Op.1 No.4** is the fourth of the first set of six he composed during the early 1770s and were said to be influenced by the early string quartets of Haydn which were just becoming popular in Paris. Although the writing may show that he had learned something from Haydn's work, each of the Op.1 quartets only has two movements instead of three like the Mannheim School or four that Haydn began using early on. Both movements are relatively short. The first movement, Allegro moderato, has an engaging, somewhat yearning main theme. An echo effect can be heard from time to time. Every now and then, the first violin is given leave to play brief virtuoso passages, which Bologne perhaps intended for himself. The finale, Rondeau, is energetic and full of forward movement. While no one would mistake this quartet as a masterwork, it is nonetheless important as it is among some of the earliest string quartets written in France and hence historically important. That said, it is also charming.



Franz Bölsche (1869-1935) was born in the German town of Wegenstedt. He studied composition with Woldemar Bargiel at the Royal Conservatory in Berlin and subsequently pursued a career as a composer and teacher, eventually becoming a professor at the Cologne Conservatory where Volkmar Andreae numbered among his many students. Bölsche was not a prolific composer but had two piano trios and two string quartets to his credit. However, the first was never published. His **String Quartet No.2 in c minor, Op.27** dates from 1900 and was published in 1904. It is not only clearly written but sounds quite good. The first movement begins with a short Adagio introduction. The principal theme of main section of the movement, Allegro, is a lyrical, bustling melody. Next comes an Allegro quasi scherzo, recommends itself in particular through its rhythmic originality, with a nicely contrasting elegiac trio. The third movement is a lovely, blossoming Adagio. The finale consists of an attractive theme with six excellent contrasting variations, the fifth of which, an Adagio, and the last, a very effective Allegretto molto, are particularly fine. This is a good work which could be performed in concert and can be warmly recommended to amateurs.



While **Alexander Borodin** (1833-1887) is fairly well-known, it is his orchestral pieces and not his chamber music which has made his name. Nine out of ten people could not tell you that the famous Borodin melody in the popular Broadway musical Kismet is from his Second String Quartet. But Borodin wrote several lovely chamber music works, most of it virtually unknown today.

His **String Quartet No.1 in A Major** dates from the mid 1870's and bears the subtitle "*Suggested by a theme of Beethoven.*" Though Borodin himself did not enlighten the reader as to which theme, it was from the final movement of Beethoven's Op.130 String Quartet in B flat Major. The first movement, Moderato—Allegro, starts with a slow introduction which builds tension and expectation especially as it begins to acceler-

ate. It is the Allegro in which traces of the Beethoven theme may be heard. The second movement, *Andante con moto*, begins with a duet in the first violin and viola. It is introspective and pensive. The middle section is a relaxed fugue on a chromatic rising line. The extraordinary third movement, *Scherzo: Prestissimo*, has a triplet figure which is quickly handed off from voice to voice at a breakneck speed. The trio section, based on a theme very close to the opening Allegro, is mostly made up of harmonics in all of the voices and creates a marvellous fairyland of tone. There was certainly nothing like it up until that time. The finale, *Andante—Allegro risoluto*, begins with a brief and *moderato* introduction. Both the 1st violin and cello have short cadenzas. The main subject of the Allegro, is quite energetic while the second subject is clearly related to several of the other themes which have appeared earlier. This is a fine work which deserves to be heard in concert and will certainly be appreciated by amateurs everywhere.

Borodin's **String Quartet No.2 in D Major** was composed in what was for him a relatively short period of time during the summer of 1881. In four movements, it begins with an amiable *Allegro moderato* in which the cello sings out the main theme, followed by the first violin. The first violin then introduces an equally lyrical second theme. The end of the movement cleverly integrates both of the main themes in a magical and soft ending. In the second movement, *Scherzo Allegro*, the violins state the main theme which is a rapid and repeated series notes, played slightly higher in pitch each time they are repeated. Against this, the viola plays a sustained counter melody. The third movement, *Notturmo*, quite possibly is the most famous piece of music Borodin ever composed. It has as its opening theme one of the most beautiful and well-known of all quartet melodies, used on Broadway and in Hollywood. There are few who cannot have heard it, and only few who know from where it originally came. In the finale, Borodin plays with two separate tempi. The main theme to the finale is stated in the opening *Andante*. Then comes a faster section, *Vivace*, in which the lower voices bring forth both parts of the first theme. Later, the first violin sings out a lyrical second theme. Borodin gradually builds tension throughout this long movement and brings it to a close in a spirit of celebration and triumph. This great quartet is performed in concert all too rarely. Amateurs who do not know it will enjoy making its acquaintance.



Hakon Børresen (1879-1954) was born in Copenhagen and studied violin and piano before entering the Royal Danish Conservatory where he studied with Johan Svendsen. He mostly wrote for orchestra and the opera but penned two string quartets. I am unfamiliar with his *String Quartet No.1 in e minor, Op.20* which he composed in 1913. It appears to have disappeared altogether. However, his **String Quartet No.2 in c minor**, no opus number, was composed in 1939. Unlike his earlier works, this quartet does not show the influence of his teacher Svendsen nor is it Nordic-sounding. Instead, the music is post Brahmsian, late Romantic. In four movements, it opens with a very effective *Allegro agitato*. There is something reminiscent of Dohnanyi. The *Intermezzo, molto vivace*, is the most striking and original of the movements. The first theme, played entirely *pizzicato*—much of it in lower registers, makes a strong impression. Some of the writing has the quartet sound like guitars. This is followed up with an *Andante patetico* which holds one's interest from start finish. The concluding *Presto*, played *attaca*, is more energetic than fast. Its main theme, somewhat astringent, starts powerfully but loses steam as it develops. A lovely and lyrical second theme unfortunately only appears briefly and does not get developed. On the whole, this Quartet is a good work and should be of interest to amateurs, but I am not sure if it merits revival in the concert hall.



Giovanni Bottesini (1821-1889) was born in the Italian village of Crema. His father was a clarinetist and saw to it that Giovanni received violin lessons. He wanted to enter the Milan Conservatory but as the family was poor, the only way he could attend was if he won a scholarship. At the time there were only two available, one for double bass the other for bassoon.

Bottesini chose the bass, taught himself to play well enough to win the scholarship and subsequently became one of the most famous bass players of all time. He was also a sought after and well-known conductor. He also composed, mostly but not entirely for the bass. Today, he is remembered for one work his *Grand Duo* for two basses and orchestra. It was transcribed by Paganini's only student Camillo Sivori for violin, bass and orchestra and it is in this version that the work is most often heard. He wrote at six string quartets. These quartets, composed sometime between 1859-1862 and became known as his *Neapolitan Quartets* as this is where they were first published.

The opening *Allegro maestoso* to **String Quartet No.2 in B flat Major, Op.2 No.1 in Bb** features really beautiful and heroic sounding melodies. Here the violin and cello often answer each other. A charming *Minuetto* follows and then comes a heart-felt *Adagio*. The Quartet concludes with a jaunty *Allegro non troppo*. The writing reminds me of the chamber works of French composers primarily known for their operas who were writing around the mid 19th Century such as Gounod or Ambrose Thomas. Certainly this could be brought to the concert hall with success.

These remarks apply equally to the fine **String Quartet No.3 in f sharp minor, Op.3 No.2 in f# minor**. Its opening tense *Allegro moderato* has a scherzo-like feel to it and indicates that Bottesini, unlike many of his countrymen then living, was aware of Beethoven and his works. A *Scherzo, Allegro brillante* follows and is a continuation of mood from the first movement. Next is a very smooth *Andantino* which leads to the concluding *Allegro spiritoso*, where at last we hear the rhythms of Italy, a Neapolitan *tarantella* but these are smoothed by Bottesini's urbane cosmopolitanism. Again a fetching work.

Bottesini won a prize for his **String Quartet No.4 in D Major, Op.4 No.3**. While the melodic material is not as striking as the previous two works, it nonetheless shows a considerable advance in technique and Bottesini must have spent some time studying Beethoven before composing it. It opens with an intriguing *Andante allegro giusto* which is followed up by a short but brilliant *Scherzo allegro vivo*. The third movement, *Adagio*, shows updated tonalities and an excellent fugal episode. The finale, *Allegro*, while unexceptional, is still workmanlike and effective. These are delightful works, especially the first two and it is a pity they are never heard. I am unfortunately unfamiliar with Nos.1, 5 and 6.



The original edition of Fritz Bovet's **String Quartet in D Major, Op.14** was reprinted some years ago wrongly attributing the composition to a relative whose name was actually Fritz Bovet. Our man's real name, however, was not **Fritz Bovet but Frederick Bovet (1825-1913)**. He was known by his nickname Fritz and it was under this name that his music was published. He was born in London to Alphonse Bovet, a Swiss who emigrated to London and who was the son of the founder of the Bovet Watch Company. He studied violin briefly at the Royal Academy of Music with the English virtuoso Henry Blagrove, who himself had studied with Spohr, and although Bovet reached a high level of proficiency, he entered the family watch business and was eventually sent to China.

He used his musical ability to transcribe music for music boxes intended for the Chinese market. The String Quartet in D Major was published in 1911 two years before his death, but it clearly was not composed then. Rather it dates from the 1840's before he was sent by his family to China. It is an attractive effective work, well-written for all of the instruments and showing that Bovet could have pursued a career as a professional musician had he so chosen. The melodies of the opening movement, Allegro molto ma sostenuto, flow along effortlessly full of forward motion. The second movement, Andante religioso e cantabile, is set of variations based on a lovely folk tune. Next comes a Minuetto, straight forward with hints of Beethoven. The finale, Allegro vivace, begins with a short but ominous introduction and is followed by a bright, whirling tarantella. This work makes a good amateur groups as it offers no technical difficulties, but does not belong in the concert hall.



York Bowen (1884-1961) was born London. His early training was as a pianist and he was considered a prodigy on that instrument. He studied piano and composition at the Royal Academy of Music winning many prizes while he was there. By the time he was 25, he had obtained a professorship at the Academy. He enjoyed a successful career not only as a pianist but also as a conductor and composer as well as a teacher.

Some critics have summed up his style as Rachmaninov with a tendency toward Impressionism. He wrote three string quartets. It is not clear if String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.27 was ever published or if so is lying about gathering dust in the basement of the British Library.

His **String Quartet No.2 in d minor, Op.41** won the Carnegie Trust Award and as a result was published in 1922. It was dedicated to the Philharmonic Quartet of London, then one of the leading groups before the public. The opening movement, Allegro assai, begins with an agitated, yearning theme, full of chromaticism. A second subject is quieter and sounds vaguely French before it becomes unmistakably English. The lovely middle movement, Poco Lento, is somewhat sad and reflective and very romantic. The nervous finale, Presto, quite original, especially for its use of pizzicato throughout. The main theme is quick and jittery and often interrupted by loud choral notes. A slower subject, wayward in tonality, provides a fine contrast.

String Quartet No.3 in G, Op.46 dates from 1919 and I cannot help but wonder if it was not a reworking of his first quartet. The opening gorgeous and uplifting movement Allegro moderato e semplice is redolent of the English countryside. The second movement Poco lento e espressivo is dreamy, calm and pastoral. The finale, Allegro assai con spirit is a jaunty, upbeat affair, lively, with a touch of folk music added. This work definitely would be a hit in concert and is easier to play than No.2

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) like the other famous composers about whom entire books have been written, is included here for the sake of completeness. Three of his quartets survived. Brahms who was hyper critical destroyed, according to his good friend the famous violinist Joseph Joachim, some 18 string quartets. And the sad part being, Joachim felt some of the destroyed quartets were superior to the ones he let survive. His two best quartets are the first two, Op.51 Nos.1 and 2. Of course, you should play them. Are they great masterpieces, well, that depends upon whom you read. They are certainly good works, but many feel that Brahms needed at least five or six strings and that his sextets are his best chamber works for strings, followed by the string quintets. Many feel that his quartets lack a certain something that an added voice or two would have fixed. The third string quartet Op.67 generally is felt not up to the quality of his first two.



Jan Brandts Buys (1868-1939) came from a long line of professional musicians. His father was an organist in the town of Zutphen in the Netherlands where Jan was born. He studied at the Raff Conservatory in Frankfurt and in 1893 settled in Vienna where he got to know Brahms, who along with Edvard Grieg, praised his early works. His piano concerto won an important international prize and such famous

artists as Lilli Lehmann often included his songs on the same program with those of Schubert. He was best known for his comic operas such as *The Tailors of Schonau* and *The Man in the Moon*, which gained considerable international acclaim. But he did not ignore chamber music, penning several works various ensembles.

The **String Quartet in c minor, Op.19** dates from 1911. The dramatic main theme to the first movement, Tempo Rubato, is deeply felt and highly effective and thematic material is skillfully handled. The lovely Intermezzo which follows has an old-fashioned aura to it. The third movement, Ziemlich langsam, with its artfully executed changes of tempo and mood, might almost be considered a theme, which is like a folk tune, and set of variations. The splendid finale, Allegro ma non troppo, combines joviality with lyricism. This is a good work for concert but also for amateurs.

In 1905 he composed his **Romantische Serenade, Op.25**. It is in five movement and begins with a Nocturne in which the viola leads the others through a haunting but gorgeous movement filled with the sounds of the jungle at night. There is an almost Latin feel similar to that found in Villa Lobos' String Quartet No.5 The second movement marked Alla Marcia is a somewhat slow Berlin/Vienna salon march from the period just before the First World War. Not an overly sentimental run wild but a superb little gem, seriously written, perfect of its kind. The exotic middle section is particularly fine. Next comes a Serenade, Allegro molto vivace, which again gives the viola the leadership throughout as it plays a very lyrical theme to a frenzied accompaniment in the other three voices. It is altogether more modern sounding than the preceding two movements. In fourth place is Schmen, Allegro molto. This very short scherzo, though it ends on a calm note, sends the strings buzzing about like insects expressing a kind of frantic angst. The last movement is also a Nocturne, very melancholy in feeling. The cello, which has up until this point been melodically used rather sparingly, is given a big singing solo in the middle section. This serenade would make a powerful impression in the concert hall where it should be brought but will also give pleasure to amateurs as it presents no undue difficulties,

In 1908, he composed a **Suite in the Ancient Style, Op.23** It is a work in a lighter vein and quite straight forward with no technical difficulties. It opens with a substantial Praeludium and is followed by a charming Gavotte with a musette for its trio section. Next is a warm and finely wrought Arioso which in turn is succeeded by a lovely Menuetto with trio. A fleet finale in fugal form completes this fine work. The Suite is quite interesting in that while *in the ancient style* usually means from the Baroque, Brandts-Buys combines several older styles. For example, the main section of the Praeludium which is entirely in the baroque style has a middle section which is late classical or early romantic. The work is strong enough for the concert hall as well as the home. Begun in 1908 and revised in 1917 is his final work string quartet.

The **Sizilianische (Sicilian) Serenade**. It is subtitled *Some cheerful music for unhappy musicians*. A few Sicilian folk tunes can be found in the five concise, appealing movements, but this is by no means overdone and at times little of Sicily is to be heard. The opening Allegro appassionato has a certain earthiness or rustic quality to it. Next comes a sweet Lento ma non troppo in the form of a nocturne full of yearning. The third movement, a

Presto, is fetching and has an interesting section in which it sounds as if a mandolin had joined the ensemble. The following Comodo ma burlesco is filled with good spirits and the elegant finale, Grazioso concludes this excellent work. It too would do well in concert and is not hard to play and also be recommended to amateurs.



Johannes Bernardus van Bree (1801-57) was born in Amsterdam and studied violin and composition there with various teachers. He became conductor of Amsterdam's leading music ensemble and composed in nearly every genre. In the 1830's, he founded the Amsterdam String Quartet and served as its 1st violinist for over 20 years. He composed three string quartets. **String Quartet No.1 in a minor** dates from 1833 and **String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major**

composed in 1840 and dedicated to the German violin virtuoso Bernhard Molique, though tuneful and often effective, also have, in my opinion defects which lead me to say that they are not worth your time. Of course, you can investigate for yourself, but they are overwritten with a lot of unnecessary padding.

However, his **String Quartet No.3 in d minor** dating from 1848 is a much better work. The lovely first movement, Allegro moderato, opens with a sad and haunting theme. One feels the influence of both Schubert and Mendelssohn. The lively and Mendelssohnian second movement, Scherzo vivace, is exuberating. Perhaps the show piece of the quartet is the third movement, Air russe, Andante con variazioni. It is a set of variations on a well-known Russian folk tune, Krasny Sarafan, The red cloak. The finale, Allegro un poco agitato, is a pastiche of several styles. Certain Mendelssohnian effects are quite evident but successfully employed. Despite its eclectic nature, the movement works. Not a masterpiece, but perhaps good enough to be heard in concert as it makes a fine impression. It is a good choice for amateurs as well.



Tomás Bretón (1850-1923) was born in the Spanish town of Salamanca. He is yet another example of that famous old chestnut, "talent will out." The son of a poor baker who died when he was but two, Bretón learned the violin entirely by chance from a friend of his brother. By age 8, he was a student at the local conservatory. At 10 he was eking out a living in a theater orchestra. At 16, he entered the Madrid Conservatory studying violin and composition while continuing to make

a living as a restaurant violinist. It was about this time in 1866, he tried his hand at writing a string quartet, it was in G Major, but this was little more than an academic exercise. After graduating with honors and taking a first prize in composition, he began a his career as a conductor and composer of Zarzuelas, the Spanish counterpart to the French Opera Comique or the Viennese Operetta. In 1880, Bretón won a scholarship which allowed him to study in Rome and subsequently Vienna where he learned German in order to familiarize himself with the operas of Wagner. Back in Madrid, he composed more than a dozen Zarzuelas, upon which, it is said, his reputation rests. Ironically, Bretón did not wish to be known or remembered as a composer of light opera. Besides his compositional career for theater, he also conducted the most prominent symphony orchestra in Madrid for more than a decade and eventually taught at and became the director of the Madrid Conservatory. Though remembered today in Spain as one of the foremost composers of Zarzuelas, Bretón did not limit himself to this genre. He composed three string quartets, a piano trio, a piano quintet and a sextet for winds and piano. Unhappily for him, his music was consistently attacked by Spanish music critics as not being Spanish enough, a ridiculous criticism as any-

one who has heard the Scherzo to his **String Quartet No.1 in D Major** can attest. It was composed in sometime during the 1880s but he was unable to get it published until 1910. It may not have been his first judging from its late romantic style that one finds in the opening Allegro moderato non tanto. It begins with each instrument sequentially being given a dramatic cadenza as an introduction. Though the writing is unquestionably melodic, Bretón shows that he is familiar with post Brahmsian developments. A somber Andante gives way to what is perhaps the finest movement of the Quartet, a very Spanish-sounding Scherzo complete with contrasting trio also of Spanish flavor. The finale, Grava-Fuga-Moderato-Allegro sounds like what Haydn might have composed were he writing at the start of the 20th Century.

I am not familiar with his **String Quartet No.2 in c minor** composed in 1907 and subtitled Dramatico. **String Quartet No.3 in E Major** was his final effort in this genre and dates from 1909. The opening movement Allegro comodo starts off turbulent but the mood quickly changes and keeps changing, sometimes upbeat and dance-other times thrashing about. An interesting Andante follows. It opens with the cello singing a downcast melody to the pizzicato of the other voices. The first violin takes over but the other three still pizz. Then the viola. It has a kind of canonic structure. Eventually a lyrical, limpid melody takes over. The third movement, Allegro no mucho, makes the strongest impression. This is a Spanish sounding scherzo, very well done. The finale, Allegro deciso, is also an engaging movement that starts off with a teasing theme full of forward motion. Eventually a robust second theme appears. With the exception of the third movement, there is nothing Spanish about the quartet. Instead it sound 20th century cosmopolitan. Some Viennese, some German, some French touches. But it all adds up to an original sounding quartet which is quite good and deserves to be heard in concert hall and which can be managed by experienced amateurs.



Frank Bridge (1879-1941) was born in the English city of Brighton. learned to play violin from his father, and had much early exposure to practical musicianship, playing in theatre orchestras his father conducted. He studied violin and composition, the latter from Charles Stanford, at the Royal College of Music. He later played viola in prominent quartets and was a respected conductor. When Frank Bridge's

chamber music first appeared, it was a revelation to amateurs as well as professional players. His compositional style changed greatly over the course of his life. In the works composed before the First World War in 1914, it was basically late and or post romantic.

His first work for string quartet was his **Three Novelletten** which date from 1904. Bridge wrote the Novelletten as a kind of preparation for the famous Cobbett Chamber Music Competition. The Cobbett Competitions were designed to encourage the younger generation of British composers to write chamber music. Its founder and benefactor was the chamber music aficionado William Wilson Cobbett. The rules of the competition provided an alternate format, the old English Fancy for Fantasia from the time of Purcell, to the traditional four movement work which had developed from Haydn onwards. There was to be only a single movement of around 15 minutes duration embracing a variety of moods, tone colors and tempi while at the same time retaining an inner unity which required composers to provide an updated version of the old English Fantasia from the time of Purcell. There was to be only a single movement of around 15 minutes duration embracing a variety of moods, tone colors and tempi while at the same time retaining an inner unity. The Novelletten could just as easily have been presented in this fashion. The first, Andante moderato, begins and ends in a tranquil, meditative mood, in between which the music slowly rises to a dramatic climax. The

second is a kind of scherzo, consisting of quickly changing sections of different tempi: Presto, Allegretto and Moderato. There is a jazzy, Latin-American tinge to the music. The finale Novellette, Allegro vivo, is characterized by a powerful march-like followed by several canonic sections.

The **Phantasie for String Quartet** came the following year and was one of the prize winning compositions in the prestigious Cobbett Competition of 1905. Although the rules of the Competition stipulated works had to be in one movement, Bridge created three distinct sections or sub-movements within the one larger one. The opening Allegro moderato, after a boisterous, brief introduction, begins with a march-like subject. The second melody, has an almost Latin American quality to it with the lovely lyrical tune over the cello's quasi arpeggio figure. The main theme of the Andante moderato, is reminiscent of the song Londonderry Air which he also arranged for string quartet. Again, the highly romantic second subject has a Latin American mood to it. The final section, Allegro ma non troppo, begins in sprightly fashion with a very updated tonality for the time. It leads to a very attractive and more lyrical second subject which alternates with first. Bridge's purpose in writing

In 1906 he composed his **Three Idylls for String Quartet**. His purpose was to create a tonal canvas of many different textures and expressive characters and in this he succeeds quite remarkably. The first, begins Adagio molto, and has a somewhat dark and melancholy mood. The middle section has while not more upbeat has a quicker Latin beat to it. The second Idyll, Allegretto poco lento, is the shortest of the three. It, too, is melancholy but in a syncopated bluesy way. The finale Idyll, Allegro con moto, is full of nervous energy. It is traveling music, very modern for its time anticipating by several years what Gershwin and others would later do. All of the three works are suitable for concert performance and well within the grasp of amateurs to whom they can be recommended.

The same year he wrote his **String Quartet No.1 in e minor**. It was composed for a competition held by the Academia Filarmonica Bolognia. Though it did not win, it was the only other work singled out and received a Mention d'honneur. To meet the deadline he dashed off the whole work in a matter of weeks though it is impossible to tell this from hearing it. The first movement begins with a brief Adagio introduction before the main part, a passionate Allegro, based on a chromatic scale which helped to produce what were for the time unusual harmonies. The second movement is a heart-felt Adagio molto with great depth of expression. This followed by an affable, winsome scherzo, marked Allegretto grazioso. The main theme from the first movement makes an appearance here and also in the wide-ranging and dramatic finale, Allegro agitato. This is a first class work which deserves performance in the concert hall. Experienced amateurs will also find much to delight them.

Nine years passed until he completed his **String Quartet No.2 in g minor** in 1915. It is clear that his tonal palette had begun to change. It is in three movements but the last two have slower parts to them. The middle movement is akin to a scherzo with a brief andante middle part. The finale begins with an adagio before the main allegro. Much more difficult than his first quartet, it is unlikely that all but the best amateur players could manage this. It would be interesting in concert.

In 1916, he composed **Cherry Ripe** which takes its title from the words to a traditional English folksong of the same name by C. E. Horn. It was one of two small showcase works based on English folk tunes he wrote for string quartet at this time, the other being **Sally in Our Alley**. The melody is also taken from the song as the words. The initial use of trills and scale passages eventually lead to a canon between the first violin and cello. The refrain or chorus to the song is also given this canonic treatment. The coda begins in a mood of quiet reflection but soon the exciting scale passages return to end off the piece. The title of Sally in

Our Alley is taken from the words to another traditional English folksong, The Country Lass by Henry Carey. The melody is taken from the same folksong as the words. Both of these works are more difficult than his earlier works but not as hard as String Quartet No.2. They could make good concert encores and can be managed by good amateur players.

In 1922, Bridge composed **Sir Roger de Coverley**, the third in a series of folksongs he arranged for string quartet. The title is taken from the words from a folksong by the same name which was composed by John Playford in 1685. A series of descending scales provide an introduction to the set of variations which present the melody either in fragmented form, spread between the instruments or in its entirety. Toward the end, the viola in a humorous and jocular interlude introduces the famous folk tune Auld Lang Syne often sung at that time of the year. The work concludes with a variation which is in form a Scottish reel. Again, this is a work which could make a good encore but tough for the average amateur.

In 1926 came **String Quartet No.3**. By now his tonality had advanced to a kind of post impressionism filled with considerable dissonance. The first movement, Andante-Allegro, is filled with unusual chromatic dissonances. This is followed by a very modern version of an intermezzo, Andante con moto. The finale, Allegro energico, is full of energy and edgy dissonance. It makes a strong impression and could be presented in concert. For all practical purposes, it is beyond amateur players.

String Quartet No.4 completed in 1937 has much use of chromaticism and dissonance but also often combines this with a vague neo-classicism. A hectic Allegro energico serves as the first movement, The middle movement, a somewhat downcast Quasi minuetto, makes the strongest impression and is the most approachable part of the quartet. The finale, Adagio, allegro con brio, is restless and full of forward motion. Perhaps better in concert than No.3 and again, beyond amateurs.



Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) was born in the English town of Lowestoft. He is one of the best known English composers and one of the better known ones of the 20th century. He studied privately with Frank Bridge and later at the Royal College of Music in London. After leaving the RAM Britten began work on a quartet he titled Among his earliest works for string quartet titled Alla Quartetto Serioso. which he abandoned in 1933

However his **Three Divertimenti for String Quartet** from 1936 were taken from that it and reworked. It opens with a March which sounds rather like some kind of exotic and jolly drill music. The use of glissandi places not found in the earlier work places the music solidly in the modern era. Pizzicato chords and opening theme are at one and the same time charming and fresh, while still sounding very modern. The finale, Burlesque, is full of exuberance, and breathless forward motion.

Britten considered his **Alla Marcia** from 1933 to be a possible first movement for the discarded Alla Quartetto Serioso. It is quite similar to the Divertimenti in its harmonic language. Largely tonal this is a pleasant morsel. Both works can be handled by experienced amateurs and would make fine encores.

His **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.25** dates from 1941 while he was traveling in America. He received an offer to write a quartet for the Coolidge foundation. It is in four movements, and these seem to conform to the shape of the classical string quartet: a sonata-form first movement, a scherzo, a slow movement, and a fast finale. But from a standpoint of sound and the way the themes reappear in different guises, it is highly original. In the opening Andante sostenuto, the two violins and viola play a pulsing pattern in their highest registers. While the pizzicato of the cello presents an entirely different motif. These two themes

return throughout the quartet. The long opening section gives way to a rhythmic, angular Allegro vivo derived from the very beginning kernels. An Allegretto con slancio in 3/4 time is bristling with energy: sharp attacks, trills, whistling runs. After the violent end of the second movement, the third movement, Andante calmo, brings a welcome relief of peacefulness. There is an agitated middle section which is derived from the pizzicato motif of the cello in the first movement. The finale, marked Molto vivace, demands virtuoso performers. The energy never lets up from start to finish. Only professionals need apply. Certainly worth hearing.

His **String Quartet No.2** in three movements dates from 1945 and was composed to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the death of English composer Henry Purcell. The big opening movement, Allegro calmo senza rigore is with its strange tonal intervals and short snippets of melody at one and the same time creates a very modern sound which somehow strangely enough also sounds a bit like the music of the late 17th century English baroque. The middle movement, Vivace, is a hard driving scherzo with powerful unison passages juxtaposed against delicate episodes. There is an interestingly contrasting trio section in which the first violin plays loud double-stops against a quiet accompaniment in the three lower voices. The finale, entitled Chacony, sostenuto, is an obvious reference to the baroque Chaconne in which there are several variations, usually in triple time against a short repeated theme in the bass. Purcell wrote several. Britten uses the form and but his variations constantly change not only the melody but also the rhythm. These are from time to time interrupted by cadenzas or solos by the first violin, the viola and the cello. The finale variation, written on a big scale, uses a kind of droning effect against the original theme, a common practice in baroque chaconnes. The quartet is clearly modern yet certainly more accessible than the works of the 12 tone school. An obvious candidate for concert performance but not for the average amateur.

Britten composed his **String Quartet No. 3** in 1975. It has some of the same arch-structure that Bartok used, although it does not sound like Bartok. Each of the five movements has a descriptive title. The opening Duets is built on a series of pairings of instruments in different combinations. Viola. The second movement, Ostinato, marked very fast, is rather violent sounding. The title of the third movement, Solo, refers to the central role of the first violin, which has the melodic interest here, often above minimal accompaniment from the other three voices far below. Next comes Burlesque, con fuoco which full of pounding action. The finale, Recitative and Passacaglia. The Passacaglia is marked *La Serenissima* and proceeds calmly the movement's close which has an unsettling final chord which does not resolve.



Max Bruch (1838-1920) was born in the German city of Cologne. He studied piano and composition with the piano virtuoso and composer Ferdinand Hiller. He was a prominent teacher, conductor and composer. His **String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.9** dates from 1858. The first movement, Andante-Allegro ma non troppo has an effective introduction and a dramatic Allegro, but despite this, there is just too much unnecessary sawing. The

Adagio which follows is an attempt at a Mendelssohnian Song Without Words, but is unremarkable. The scherzo Allegro molto energico, creates ensemble problems without being particularly interesting, although the trio section is better. The finale, Molto vivace, is clearly the best movement. It sports an appealing tarantella which Bruch turns into a fugue. Sad to say, but this quartet does not even rise to the rank of average and is not in the bargain particularly easy to play from an ensemble standpoint.

String Quartet No.2 in E Major, Op.10 was composed two

years after No.1 and is an altogether better work. It must be said at the outset that the primary obstacle to presenting an effective performance is the key in which it is written. The opening Allegro maestoso is of great breadth and fine though it is, is not particularly easy to bring off. A Schumannesque Andante quasi Adagio follows. The third movement, a powerful scherzo, Vivace ma non troppo, is quite original and this movement alone makes this quartet worth playing and hearing. It opens with a turbulent, hard driving, syncopated theme in the lower two voices. Two trios, one smooth and flowing, the other more angular and dry. The finale, though good, has a rather florid first violin part and from an emotional standpoint is a bit of a let down after the scherzo. Still, this quartet can be recommended both for concert performance and to home music makers.



Anton Bruckner (1824-1897) was one of the great symphonists of the last half of the 19 century. Chamber music did not really interest him although he did compose a string quartet and a string quintet. He was trained as an organist and as a composer of church music. The quality of his playing was such that he was eventually able to obtain the prestigious position of cathedral organist of Linz. He continued his compositional studies in Vienna. Simon Sechter a famous teacher of counterpoint. At the time he wrote his **String Quartet in c minor** in 1862, he was still studying with Sechter and it is thought that the quartet, if not a homework assignment nonetheless arose from these studies. It shows the mastery of form and technique that he had achieved as a result of them. Though classical in form, the thematic material is highly romantic. The opening Allegro consists of a conversational interplay between two themes, the first reminiscent of Bach, the somewhat mysterious second already showing Bruckner's later style. The second movement, Andante, begins in a subdued fashion, later a Schubertian interlude leads to the rhythmically interesting second theme. The Scherzo which follows is quite typical of Bruckner's later symphonic style. The theme comes in wave like episodes heightened by the syncopated dotted rhythm. The trio consists of a lovely Austrian Ländler. The exciting finale, Rondo-Presto, is characterized by brilliant passages, voice leading and fine string writing. Unjustly ignored, concert performance is justified and warmly recommended to amateurs.



Giuseppe Buonamici (1846-1914) was born in the Italian city of Florence. After studying piano locally, he attended the Royal Bavarian Conservatory in Munich where he continued his piano studies with Hans von Bülow and studied composition with Joseph Rheinberger. He then pursued a career as a teacher and composer, eventually becoming a professor of piano at the Istituto Musicale in Florence.

While his **String Quartet in G Major** was not published until 1902, there is considerable evidence which dates it to Buonamici's time in Munich, more specifically 1870. It was dedicated to the violin virtuoso and leader of a famous string quartet Joseph Joachim with whom he was friends.. The flowing first movement, Allegro, with its appealing melodies is an example of fine part-writing. The Adagio which follows is a kind of instrumental vocal area, dramatic and plaintive. . A fresh and piquant Scherzo, Allegro molto, with trio comes next. A substantial Adagio introduction leads to the finale, Allegro, with its magnificent main theme. The quartet was once quite popular and often heard in concert. It is not difficult to play and can be recommended to amateur players.



Norbert Burgmüller (1810-1836) was born in the German city of Düsseldorf where his father was the city music director. After studying locally, he went to Kassel where he studied with violin and composition with Louis Spohr. Plagued by illness and personal problems, he led a retiring life as a violin and piano teacher. He did not compose a great deal, but his last works attracted the attention of

Robert Schumann who is said to have written, “After Franz Schubert’s early death, no other death could cause more grief than that of Burgmüller.” He goes on to call Burgmüller a “commanding talent”. In this regard, I think Schumann may have been carried away. His four string quartets are reasonably good and show a very promising talent, but as one critic put it, Burgmüller did not live long enough to develop his own sound.

String Quartet No.1 in a minor, Op.4 was written in 1825. To my mind, it is his best, even though it is written in the style of a quatuor brilliant, in large part because of the seemingly effortless flow of melody from one subject to the next. It is by any standard an impressive accomplishment for a 15 year old boy. In three movements, the opening Allegro already shows Burgmüller to have completely assimilated the romantic idiom. Full of charming melodies, the writing, especially the use of chromaticism, undoubtedly recalls the music of his teacher Spohr. The very fine middle movement, a somber Adagio, shows no clearly identifiable influence. The long cantilena passages in the violin and cello are occasionally broken by dramatic outbursts. The finale, Allegro assai, may have been intended as a scherzo rather than a finale. Nevertheless it serves as an effective last movement with a rather exciting, if somewhat orchestral, coda. Of interest is the fact that the writing for the cello and first violin, is often of a virtuoso nature. This can be explained by the fact that Burgmüller was an excellent violinist and his brother a fine cellist.

String Quartet No.2 in d minor, Op.7 was written a few months after the first, also while studying with Spohr. Hearing the opening Allegro, anyone familiar with Spohr’s quartets would certainly guess that he had written it. It is very good, but the writing goes beyond showing influence and reaches the level of imitation. The following Andante is also quite good with the added advantage that it does not sound like Spohr was holding the pen. A bouncy, clever Scherzo, Presto comes next. This is a first rate movement which almost justifies Schumann’s heavy praise.

String Quartet No.3 in Op.9 in d minor was completed toward the end of 1826. The opening Allegro moderato, though certainly lovely, must be rated as imitative of Spohr in great part. No one would expect this music was by anyone else, even the thematic material is derivative. The pleasant Minuetto, Allegretto which follows, thankfully, is without this imitative worship. The deeply felt and powerful slow movement, Adagio, is first rate. The bright and sunny finale provides a sharp contrast with what has come before. It has some of the melodic aura of early-mid Schubert and for the most part is free of “the Spohr sound.”

String Quartet No.4 in a minor, Op.14 was written in 1835, some 10 years after the others and toward the end of Burgmüller’s life. The opening Allegro moderato begins in dramatic enough fashion but soon the frequent repetition of the thematic material reveals that it is insufficient to support its huge length. An elegiac Andante follows. A very busy, Spohr-like first violin part can be heard but it does not mar the overall music as there is too much else going on. The Tempo di Minuetto, which serves as the third movement, is a straight forward minuet. Perhaps a little old fashioned for 1835 but still good. The finale, Allegretto con moto, begins with a near quote from a Schubert sonatina for violin. Unfortunately, its development is rather threadbare. Of the four quartets, I found this the weakest. In summing up, any fair-minded listener will conclude that some of the movements show the composer had a real talent, but at the same time it must be

admitted that the slavish imitation of Spohr, of whose quartets does not help his cause. Perhaps the fairest comparison one might make is to the quartets of Juan Cristostomo Arriaga (1806-1826) who had even less time to develop. The Arriaga quartets are in no way imitative of anyone and are from start to finish original and fresh. At the same age, Burgmüller was writing his “Spohresque” quartets, Arriaga penned three works which can be said to sound like no one else writing at the time.



Adolf Busch (1891-1952) was born in the German town of Siegen. He studied violin and composition at the Cologne Conservatory and became one of the leading soloists of the day specializing in the classical repertoire. He also founded two famous string quartets, the Vienna Konzertverein Quartet and the Busch Quartet. He wrote three works for string quartet.

The first, **Serenade for String Quartet, Op.14**, appeared in 1919. This entirely appealing work is in no way hard to play. By giving the work the title ‘Serenade’ Busch means to imply that this is not a serious work but one meant for entertainment. The first movement Allegro moderato, ma con spirito, begins with an introductory march and is followed by two impressive themes. The Andante sostenuto which follows is lush but subdued. The third movement, Allegro vivace, is full of humor and is contrasted by an unpretentious but charming middle section. The finale, Allegretto, is a theme and very effective set of variations. Recommended for concert and home. I am not familiar with his

String Quartet in b minor, Op.29 dates from 1924. It is in one movement, and as a result has traveled under the name Quartettsatz. It is in two sections—Lento, Vivace ma non troppo presto and shows the influence of Max Reger. The third work was a **String Quartet in b minor** composed toward the end of his life.



Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) in the Italian town of Empoli just south of Florence. He is remembered as one of the greatest pianists of his time. His musical talent showed itself early and by the age of 8 he was performing before the public which led his family to move to Vienna. Busoni 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.

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 first movement, Allegro moderato, pathetic, 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. Busoni uses the viola to introduce the lovely folk tune upon which the second movement, Andante, is based. A Minuetto 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. 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. The lyrical theme of the middle section

is taken from the Andante introduction. After only a few measures, it dissolves into a fugue. This work certainly deserves to be heard in concert and will also be of interest to amateurs.

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. Traditional tonality is cleverly interspersed with what was for the time modernity. The music virtually bristles with original and unusual ideas. The Beethovenian second movement, *Andante con moto*, is much more traditional. It begins as a lovely, melancholy duet between the cello and first violin. 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. Busoni begins the finale with an introduction, *Andantino*. It is pensive though not ominous and bears no relationship to the mood of main movement, *Allegro con brio mit Humor*. The first subject is given to the cello alone with the development beginning with a short fugue which is gradually torn apart by a process of chromatic disintegration. 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 work by an accomplished composer. It cannot be said to be easy but certainly manageable by experienced amateur players.



Oscar Byström (1821-1909) was born in the Swedish city of Stockholm and although trained as a musician, early on pursued a career in the military as it was nearly impossible to make a living as a musician in Sweden. At first, Byström made his name as a salon pianist and composer of occasional pieces, but around 1850 after meeting Franz Berwald, he attempted more ambitious works, including a piano trio, a piece for cello and piano and two string

quartets. For the next 30 years, he was quite active on the Swedish musical scene as a conductor, composer. His **String Quartet in c minor (Quartetto Svedese)** was composed in 1856, originally in 3 movements. But nearly 40 years later, in October of 1895, on the occasion of his being honored by Sweden's leading chamber music organization, the Mazer Chamber Music Society, with a performance of this Quartet, Byström decided to compose an additional movement, an *Intermezzo* consisting of Swedish songs (or as he called them "cantici svedesi") which he stuck between the second and old third movement. He then rechristened the Quartet with the name *Quartetto Svedese*. Most Swedish critics have attacked this 'meddling' on the grounds that stylistically, the *Intermezzo* destroyed the work's unity. The opening movement, *Lento-Allegro molto*, features a lovely, lilting melody of a rather relaxed and unrushed nature, despite the tempo suggestion. It is lyrical and effective but sounds more like an *Allegretto* and a middle movement. A *Largo* comes next. The main theme is a vocal melody which sounds vaguely of Stephen Foster. It is repeated several times after brief interruptions by a second theme which is nothing more than a series of dramatic chords rather than a sustained melody. The main subject to the finale, *Allegro quasi presto*, bears some affinity to a theme from one of Beethoven's Late Quartets and feels like a scherzando. This is an unpretentious and charming effort. While in no way a

great work and clearly derivative, it is still within its limits, accomplished. The *Intermezzo*, *cantici svedesi*, consists of two Swedish folksongs. The first, a kind of Christmas carol, is sung by the 1st violin to *pizzicato* in the lower voices and is very fetching. The second is clearly a church hymn written in choral fashion. Also very effective. This movement would make a charming encore. The Quartet can be recommended to amateurs.



Roffredo Caetani (1871-1961) was born in Rome. He was an Italian aristocrat, eventually holding the titles of Prince of Bassett and Duke of Sermoneta. His father had been mayor of Rome at one time, and served as president of the Rome Philharmonic. Franz Liszt was his godfather and it was Liszt who recognized the boy's musical talent and sent him to one of his favorite students, the piano virtuoso and one of Italy's leading composers Giovanni Sgambati. Caetani studied piano

and composition with Sgambati. He then continued his studies in Vienna where he got to know Brahms and later in Berlin. Though not a prolific composer, he wrote operas, orchestral works and two string quartets. He taught at the conservatory in Rome which had been founded by Sgambati but was also active as a patron of the arts. His **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.1** dates from 1888. In the form of a Lisztian Tone Poem, it is in one extensive movement, well designed and with lush themes. The composer shows a fondness for the fugual form with which he appears to be well acquainted. Fast sections---*Allegro* and *Allegro agitato*---are quite original and are interspersed with slower ones. As one finds in Liszt, there is a repetition of sections. His musical ideas are attractive, especially so in the *Un poco moderato* episodes. Unquestionably original and fresh sounding, the work requires players of professional standard or experienced amateur ensemble players. It is a fine work deserving performance and is sure to make a strong impression on its audience. **String Quartet No.2 in f minor, Op.12** appeared in 1907. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, later *Allegro*, has two themes, one quite dramatic, the other lyrical. This powerful movement is full of original ideas. The leisurely middle movement, *Molto lento*, recalls the religious music of the Catholic service. The finale, *Presto*, has Slavic overtones. The whole thing is excellently done. The Quartet plays easily and sounds good. It can be recommended both for concert and to amateur players



Leonhard von Call (1767-1815) was born in the town of Eppan in South Tirol, then part of the Austrian Empire, and since 1919 in northern Italy. Although he studied music as a boy and became a virtuoso on the guitar and mandarin, composing, teaching and performing was something he did as an avocation. He served as an officer in the Austrian army during the war against the French Republic and was ennobled for bravery. The rest of his life, he worked as

an official in the Imperial Treasury in Vienna. In his spare time, he composed and became a much sought after teacher. Most of his compositions were for chamber ensembles, the bulk of which involved the guitar. He was a prolific composer and is thought to have composed more than 200 works. Most of these were designed for amateurs and home music making rather than virtuoso players and for this reason as well as the fact that he had a gift for writing very appealing melodies, his works achieved tremendous popularity during the first part of the 19th century.

His **String Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op.39** is the first of a set of three quartets which were published shortly before his death by the Vienna firm of Carl Haslinger in 1815. However

most scholars seem to think the quartets were composed in the late 1790s but only given to Haslinger at a later date after von Call's chamber music with guitar had become popular. All three quartets are representative of the typical Vienna Classical Style. In four movements, the opening Allegro moderato features a gentle and lovely melody in the first violin and later a dialog between the cello and first violin. The second movement is a theme and set of five variations. Next comes a charming Menuet. The work concludes with a toe-tapping Rondo, moderato.

String Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.140 is the second of a set. The opening Allegro, much like the first quartet, features a dialog between the cello and first violin. The second movement is a lovely Adagio. Next comes another typical Viennese Menuet with contrasting trio. The work concludes with a toe-tapping Rondo, Allegro. The finale quartet of the set,

String Quartet No.3 in F Major, Op.141, is notable for its generous treatment of the cello. Not many works from this period did this. It begins with a stately, Allegro, but slowly the tempo picks up. The second movement is a theme and set of six variations. Next comes a charming Menuetto with two trios. The work concludes with an appealing Rondo, moderato. All three of the works are quite similar in style and feel, perhaps no surprisingly so since they were composed one after the other. Though hardly great works, they are historically valuable, and like the quartets of Krommer and the Wranitzky brothers, give a good idea of what the contemporaries of Haydn and Mozart were producing. The target audience of much of von Call's music was home music makers and amateurs, in particular, will want to have a chance to play this appealing and effective work.



Giuseppe Cambini (1746–1825) was born in the Italian town of Livorno. Surprisingly little is known of his life. Surprising given that he and his music was immensely popular in Paris during the 1770's and 1780's where he was then living. Much of what we know of Cambini's early life comes from his own account, which he almost certainly embellished. He claimed to have studied the violin with Filippo Manfredi and that he was the violist in a quartet which included Pietro Nardini on first violin and Luigi Boccherini on cello. He made Mozart's acquaintance in Paris when the latter was touring there but most likely did not know Haydn whom he claimed was a friend of his. He emigrated to Paris in the early 1770's where his music was extremely well received. So he began cranking out works with great rapidity. He wrote more than 80 symphonies, fourteen operas and 150 string quartets as well as numerous trios, quintets etc. One might almost conclude that he had a factory full of elves working for him.

Cambini's **String Quartet in b minor, Op.40 No.3 T.159** dates from 1789. It is one of a set of 12 quartets which he published that year and it is one of the few which has received a modern edition. The opus numbers of Cambini's works are meaningless as different publishers often used the same opus number for an entirely different set of works. Op.40 is an example of this. Besides referring to this set of quartets, it also refers to a set of string trios. According to D.L. Trimpert, the cataloger of Cambini's quartets, hence the T numbers, this set of quartets was one of his last. It is in three movements—A stormy Allegro risoluto, followed by lovely vocal Largo and concluded by an exciting Presto. Obviously, not every work or even most by a composer like Cambini who cranked out works at the rate he did are worth investigating. Nonetheless, some are not only historically important, but interesting enough to stand on their own. This quartet is one such work and shows why Cambini's chamber music was in such demand in late 18th century France. Not a candidate unless for historical reasons to show what was being played in late 18th century Paris. But it can be recommended to amateurs.



The only known chamber music of **Manuel Canales** (1747-1786): **String Quartet Nos.1-6, Op.3**. He wrote other quartets (Opp.1-2) but these have been lost. He was born and trained at Toledo and joined the service of the 12th Duke of Alva in Madrid in 1770, about the same time Boccherini arrived from Italy. On the title page to the Op.3 Quartets, which were published in London in 1780, appear the words

“Composer to the King of Spain.”, apparently a boast made either by the composer or his publisher to increase sales. It was not true. Space does not permit a discussion of each movement from every quartet, however, an impression of the whole is certainly in order. Several scholars have noted that Haydn's Op.9 quartets seem to have influenced Canales who used 4 movements, rather than the three typical of the Mannheim school; a minuet always appears as a 2nd movement. From a compositional standpoint, Boccherini's influence can be heard in the filigree work given to the first violin and in certain extended chords. The middle voices are never given anything but simple supporting roles. But few composers were giving anything more to the middle voices back in the 1770's. Interestingly, the cello is sometimes given short solos and even bursts of virtuosic melody, perhaps because Canales, a fine violinist, was also an excellent cellist. This is an important set of quartets not because they are great by today's standards, but because like Haydn's Op.9, they were for their time in the vanguard. Historically important as examples of the work of an indigenous Spanish composer. Also, unlike so many works from this period, they are not written in concertante form. While the 1st violin dominates, it does so no more egregiously than in Haydn's or Boccherini's quartets of the same period. Each of these quartets begins with a fast movement, generally an Allegro Maestoso, a Minuet with trio follows, then a slow movement—a Largo or an Adagio, and lastly a Presto or Allegro. The writing is always competent; the melodies, while perhaps not extraordinary, are not threadbare, and several movements have remarkably original effects such as the Largo and Allegro non molto of Op.3 No.3. Okay for home music makers.



Teresa Carreño (1853-1917) was born in Caracas, Venezuela. She showed extraordinary musical promise at an early age. The brilliance of her piano playing soon provided the decisive impetus for her family's decision to leave Venezuela. In 1862, the family moved to New York City where she studied with the American virtuoso Louis Moreau Gottschalk. In 1866, her family relocated to Paris where she played for Rossini and Liszt, and befriended Gounod and Saint-Saëns. A few years later she began a career as a concertizing virtuoso pianist. Although she was considered one of the finest pianists of her day, she also pursued a career as an opera singer and conductor. Although she mainly composed for the piano, she composed a string quartet and serenade for string orchestra.

Her **String Quartet in b minor**, dates from 1896. Unlike many pianist composers, her quartet shows that she had a sound grasp of quartet technique and style. The main theme of the opening movement, Allegro, is a characteristically dramatic melody while the second subject, introduced by the viola, is more lyrical and expressive. Most fetching of all is a third theme, marked 'con dolore.' The second movement, Andante, has for a main theme a reflective, somewhat sad melody which recalls that of the slow movement to Haydn's Op.77 No.2, the Second Lobkowitz Quartet. Particularly effective is the dramatic middle section marked Agitato con passione. Next comes a restless Mendelssohnian Scherzo, Allegro ma non troppo. The lovely trio sec-

tion provides a fine contrast. The powerful finale, *Allegro risoluto*, is full of energy and vigor. The development is well done and in the final section a first rate fugue appears. Once frequently performed, it still deserves concert performance but can also be recommended to amateurs.



Alfredo Casella (1883-1947) was born in the Italian city of Turin. He studied at the Paris Conservatory, piano with Louis Diemer and composition with Faure. He pursued a career as a piano soloist, conductor and composer. His style cannot be categorized but was rather eclectic showing influences of Debussy, Reger, Richard Strauss and Mahler. His music is tonal but not without episodes of dissonance. He wrote two works for string quartet.

The first, **Cinque Pezzi, Op.34** dates from 1920. The work opens with an edgy *Preludio: Allegro vivace e barbaro*. Barbaro is the key word to this hard driving but tonally harsh movement. The second movement entitled *Ninna Nanna: Tempo di Berceuse* opens quietly as the instruments slowly join in a lilting theme that richens and develops with many delicate and atmospheric musical ideas before ending quietly. *Valse ridicule: Tempo di valzer grazioso* is a strange, dissonant, spectral waltz that is followed by *Notturmo: Lento grave funebre* full of strange harmonies. There is an opening flourish to the final movement that soon gives way to a lively *Fox-Trot: Tempo giusto (Allegro molto moderato)* The first violin is given the melody as the others beat the rhythm. An interesting work deserving concert performance but beyond all but the best amateurs players.

His second work for quartet, **Concerto per archi, Op.40** dates from 1923. The opening movement, *Sinfonia: Allegro brioso e deciso* immediately shows an astringency as the theme hurtles forward. The second subject is just as frantic. The second movement, *Siciliana: Andante dolcemente mosso*, is altogether quieter with a gentle melody passed around the instruments. Next comes a *Minuetto: Recitativo. Aria: Allegretto grazioso e molto moderato* which is relatively upbeat. But not without little dissonances. The finale, *Canzone: Allegro giocoso e vivacissimo* commences with a bright and breezy melody that develops some strongly rhythmic dissonances. Again, worth concert performance but not really for amateur players.



Alexis de Castillon (1838-1873) was considered by many to be the most talented instrumental French composer of the last half of the 19th century. He was born in the French city of Chartres. As a member of the nobility his parents initially expected him to have a military career, which for a time he pursued, joining the imperial cavalry. However, his love of music, which came from the piano lessons he had received as a boy, led him to enter the

Paris Conservatoire where he ultimately studied with César Franck. His health, always of a fragile nature, was not helped by his military service in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 and deteriorated. He never recovered. He composed several chamber works which his contemporaries considered to be first rate.

He wrote one complete string quartet, the second was never completed. **String Quartet in a minor, Op.3**, though composed in 1867, sounds as if was written thirty years later. Tonally ahead of its time, unique, deep, powerful, intricate, thorny, magnificent--were what latter days critics called it. But at the time, no one dared to publish it--it was too modern, too difficult to understand--until 1900 when Vincent d'Indy, then one of France's most famous composers, pressured the French publisher Durand to print it. And even then it was considered ultra modern. Some called it the French counterpart to Beethoven's Late Quartets and indeed,

one is struck by the structural similarities of Castillon's quartet and that of Beethoven's Opus 130, 131 and 132. It is in three movements, although the middle movement is in reality two in one. The work begins with an *Allegro* that is filled with unexpected tempo changes and sudden silences. Two themes, one con fuoco and powerful, the other calmer and more melodic, are juxtaposed throughout the substantial movement. The massive second movement begins with a short *Adagio* which leads to an *Allegro scherzando* and then concludes with an expressive *Adagio molto lento*. The opening mood of the finale, *Molto grave*, is mysterious with very modern modulations and is followed by a recitative in the first violin and more silences before a spirited fugue breaks forth. To be sure, this work will not be to everyone's taste, and much like Beethoven's Late Quartets, it requires more than playing or hearing to make sense and get a real feel for this unusual work. It will never be popular but still deserves to be heard in concert.



Georgy Catoire (1861-1926) was an important figure in Russian musical life at the turn of the 20th century and is generally considered the father of Russian modernism. He was born in Moscow to a French noble family which had emigrated to Russia in the early 19th century. Although fascinated by music, he studied mathematics and science at the University of Moscow, graduating in 1884. After graduation, however, he decided to devote himself to music.

His early compositions showed the influence of Tchaikovsky who described Catoire as talented but in need of serious training. Eventually Catoire was to study composition with Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov, Arensky and Taneyev. In 1916, he was appointed Professor of Composition at the Moscow Conservatory, a position he held for the rest of his life. Catoire wrote several treatises on music theory, which became the foundation for the teaching of music theory in Russia. His composition style was a synthesis Russian, German and French influences--Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Cesar Franck, Debussy and Richard Wagner were the chief influences. From them, Catoire developed a highly personal and original idiom. It was from his piano teacher Karl Klindworth, a close friend of Wagner's, that Catoire came to admire Wagner. He was one of the few Russian composers to do so. His championing of Wagner is partially responsible for the fact that his works are relatively unknown today. Rimsky-Korsakov's circle disliked Wagner's music intensely and did little to promote it. This resulted in its being barely known in Russia. They also shunned Catoire's music because he was a Wagnerite.

His **String Quartet in f# minor, Op.23** dates from 1913 and is in four movements. The opening *Allegro moderato* begins with a late Russian romantic theme which has a restless and searching quality to it. Catoire quickly brings it to an impressive climax. The riveting second movement, *Allegro fantastico*, is a very original sounding scherzo with some very expressive and unusual tonal effects. The big third movement, *Andante*, is a theme and set of seven variations. The theme is a highly romantic, lyrical melody. Each of the variations shows a different mood, some are extraordinarily powerful. In the brooding finale, *Allegro impetuoso*, echoes of Tchaikovsky can be heard. Almost immediately, Catoire builds dramatic tension and excitement. This is a fine work which can be recommended to professionals and experienced amateur players who will also enjoy it.

George Chadwick (1854-1931), for long known as the Dean of American Composers, received his first music lessons from his brother. Soon he advanced so quickly he was serving as organist for the local church. Eventually, Chadwick found his way to the famous Leipzig Conservatory where in 1877 he studied with Carl Reinecke and Salomon Jadassohn. Never regarded as an extraor-



inary talent, soon after entering the Conservatory, his progress in composition astounded his teachers and everyone else. Several of his early works, written while there, won prizes and his name spread as far away as England. After graduating, he chose to further his studies by taking lessons privately with Joseph Rheinberger in Munich. He returned to Boston in 1880 and began a long career as a composer, conductor and teacher. Many important late

19th and early 20th century American composers were to study with him, including William Grant Still, Horatio Parker, Frederick Shepherd Converse and Arthur Farwell. Chadwick served as director of the New England Conservatory for 33 years.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor dates from around 1878 when Chadwick was still studying with Reinecke and Jadassohn at the Leipzig Conservatory. Both were very impressed. Jadassohn judged it to be of professional quality and not a student work. Though given several performances in Germany, England and New England, Chadwick never arranged for it to be published and eventually gave the manuscript to the New England Conservatory of Music. It finally was published in 2006 by Edition Silvertrust. In the first movement, *Allegro con brio*, the powerful, but brooding, main theme is entrusted to the cello. Though not overt, there is nonetheless a vaguely American quality to it. The part writing is superb and the masterful way in which each of the instruments is treated could not but have impressed his teachers. The opening notes to the second movement, *Andante non troppo lento*, suggest a chorale, but this impression is quickly dispelled by the highly romantic music which follows. The main section of the third movement, *Menuetto*, is more of a scherzo than a minuet. For the theme of the contrasting trio section, Chadwick uses the New England folk tune, *Shoot the Pipe*. The buoyant and brilliant finale is superbly crafted and makes a fine impression upon the listener. Certainly this quartet belongs in the concert hall. Additionally, it is quite important because it demonstrates that Chadwick, who introduced American themes into his music more than 20 years before Dvorak set foot on American soil, was a pioneer and had not merely copied the idea of using American melodies from the more famous Czech as he was later accused. Presenting no great technical difficulties, amateurs will definitely enjoy playing this work.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major also dates from 1878 and was written only a few months after No.1 and shortly before he graduated. Both of his famed teachers noted he possessed extraordinary compositional talent as demonstrated by works "far above the student level." It was premiered both in Europe and America with tremendous success and was the work which put Chadwick on the map. But like the first quartet, it was never commercially published until it was brought out by Edition Silvertrust in 2006. The opening *Andante-Allegro con brio* almost seamlessly slides from a pastorale to a quick, frenetic movement full of drive. There is something fresh about it, a kind of New World, American "can-do" dynamism. The *Andante espressivo ma non troppo lento* shows a wide range of moods and colors and builds to a powerful climax. The *Scherzo, Allegro risoluto ma moderato* is exactly what the titles indicates, a very resolute, almost plodding, theme made interesting by the embellishments around it. The middle section, with its more dainty subject, makes a fine contrast. The finale, *Allegro molto vivace*, is an invitation to jump out of your chair and throw your hat in the air. Its dance rhythms beckon with American vigor. Another fine work for the concert hall and the stands of amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in D Major, was written about nine years later. Chadwick was already a leading musical figure in Boston and was a close friend of Franz Kneisel, concertmaster of the Boston Symphony and leader from 1885-1917 of what was then America's premier string quartet. This friendship may well

have been responsible for the impetus to write chamber music. For whatever reason, this quartet seems a step backward from his first two. Perhaps, it is simply that it lacks the same dramatic emotion with which the first two grab at one. The opening *Allegro di Molto* is accomplished with out being noteworthy but the *Tema con variazioni* which follows is of a much higher caliber. Here Chadwick takes a heavy, funereal theme in d minor and makes five original and contrasting variations. One is reminded of Rheinberger's very effective Op.93 *Theme & Variations for Quartet*. The *Allegretto semplice* is so simple and short as to be more of an interlude than a movement. The first theme to the concluding *Allegro vivace* sputters along but just can't seem to get off the ground, the second theme is altogether more ingenious. As for the ending, if I had been told, after hearing the final bars to the last movement, that this was a student work, I would not have been shocked. I doubt Reinecke or Jadassohn would have approved. Given his other quartets, this one is perhaps best left on the shelves.

String Quartet No.4 in e minor, was to be Chadwick's most popular chamber work. Dedicated to the famous Kneisl Quartet, it was performed at concerts for several years and published in 1902. It was composed between 1895-6 at a time in which Dvorak was present in America. The two composers knew each other and Chadwick actually had one of his symphonies awarded the top prize in a competition which had been sponsored by the National Conservatory (precursor to the Juilliard) of which Dvorak was then director. Dvorak's *New World* symphony was taking America by storm and the Czech's so-called use of native American melodies was much talked about in contemporary musical circles. Because the Fourth Quartet also exhibits some of these tendencies and has some echoes of Dvorak, one might think it derivative, however, it is important to remember that Chadwick had been using American themes in his works since the 1870s. It is really only in the opening *Andante moderato-Allegro* that one is definitely reminded of Dvorak. Here, as in Dvorak's *American Quartet*, the viola is given the opening theme to the Quartet in a slow tempo which does not last long but gives way to an exciting movement with great drive. The *Andante semplice* is the kind of composition of which Chadwick was a master. At once simple, as the title suggests, but with great lyric beauty. The ending, which uses a harmonic passage, is particularly striking. A scherzo, marked *Giacoso, un poco moderato* comes next. In a freak accident, Chadwick lost the manuscript to the original scherzo he had written for the quartet and was forced to write another. He worried whether it suited the rest of the work. It is forward-looking tonally, the first subject suggesting a bit of the frenetic music of urban 20th Century life. The second theme is clearly 'American' sounding and the contrasting trio introduced by the cello is masterful. The concluding *Allegro molto risoluto* opens with a powerful unisono theme which undergoes several treatments including a *lento* section in which the cello takes over playing in the treble register. This is followed by a fugue and an exciting *presto*. Amateurs and professionals alike will find this quartet very worthwhile.

His last chamber work was the **String Quartet No.5 in d minor**. Composed in 1898, some three years after the Fourth, it was published in 1900. Chadwick sketched most of this work during a summer trip to the Midwest. It was dedicated to a rival Boston quartet of the Kneisl, the Adamowski, which introduced it to concert audiences with great success. Chadwick, himself, and all subsequent writers have used the term which a then important critic had coined in describing the quartet, 'soil music.' Certainly the opening and finely written *Allegro moderato* filled with New England and perhaps prairie tunes gives ample evidence of this. A profound but lovely *Andantino* is followed by a vigorous scherzo, surprising marked *Presto e leggero* which, at least from this recording, does not seem, as far as *leggerio* is concerned, suitable. Most striking is a big viola solo in a slower trio section.

The viola is featured and given important melodic parts throughout this quartet. An excellent *Allegro vivace* concludes this fine work which again should be considered by performing quartets nor ignored by amateurs.



Ruperto Chapi (1851-1909) was born in the Valencian town of Villena. After studying locally, he entered the Madrid Conservatory subsequently winning a scholarship to study in Paris. Along with Tomas Breton, Chapi is the best known composer of Zarzuela, Spanish light opera. In 1903 Chapi started composing his four string quartets. This was no accident. Throughout the 19th century, few Spanish composers devoted themselves to

chamber music, largely due to the fact that there were no local chamber music ensembles. This changed with the formation of the Cuarteto Frances in 1901 in Madrid. This group actively encouraged and commissioned Spanish composers to write quartets. Soon there were works by Breton, Turina, del Campo and Chapi.

Chapi's **String Quartet No.1 in G Major** was the first attempt of any consequence among Spanish composers to adapt national music to the string quartet medium. A famous Spanish critic called it a breeze from the streets of Madrid and from Spain itself. Chapi wrote four string quartets. String Quartet No.1 dates from 1903. The bright and sunny first movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins with a lively Habanera type subject. This is followed by a very Spanish theme characterized by its triplets. Interrupting affairs are two short dramatic outbursts. The second movement, *Andante mosso*, has for its main subject a lovely melody which is contrasted with a pao doble dance which follows. Next comes a Scherzo with Andalusian melodies. The finale opens with a languid introduction which leads to the main part of the movement that features two Spanish dance sections—a Zortzico and a Jota. This is a wonderful work. You will not find a more Spanish sounding quartet. It truly belongs in concert where it is sure to win friends and is not beyond the range of competent amateur players who will also enjoy it.

String Quartet No.2 in F Major dates from 1904 and was dedicated to the famous Bohemian Quartet. The opening *Allegro moderato* features a snaky Spanish dance which morphs into an almost obscene conga. The second movement, *Allegretto*, is a kind of Spanish barcarole. Next comes an *Allegro vivace* which serves as scherzo. Not very Spanish sounding, it is mostly dominated by quirky pizzicato passages. The finale, *Quasi presto*, begins in orchestra fashion and almost sounds as if it could have been played by one. All in all, while this is an attractive work it is not as effective as his first.

String Quartet No.3 in D Major came the next year in 1905. He no longer seems very interested in writing nationalistic music. The music sounds more French impressionistic than anything else. Echoes of Cesar Franck and Debussy. Not as compelling as the real thing.

String Quartet No.4 in b minor was finished in 1907 and is altogether more effective than No.3. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, has a vaguely Spanish sounding main subject, exciting and with much forward motion, although it relies too heavily on this and does not introduce as much contrast or other themes as one might like to hear. The second movement, *Allegretto*, begins in start-stop fashion and is playful and light. Next comes an *Allegretto animato* which sounds a lot like the preceding *Allegretto* only it is has a much quicker tempo. Because it sounds much like came before, there is, despite, all of the rapid passage work, a sense of monotony. The nervous finale, *Allegro vivo*, at first also sounds like the preceding two movements. Much thrashing about interrupted by short, highly romantic sighs. It does create a sense of excitement. It also has the atmosphere of the opera, which after all, is what Chapi did best. If given a con-

cert performance, I think it would please audiences but this is not a work for all but the most technically secure amateurs.



Ernest Chausson (1855-1899) was born in Paris into a wealthy family. Although he received some musical training as a boy, a career in music was never envisaged by either his father or himself. He studied law and became a barrister but realized he had no interest in the law. After dabbling in writing and painting, he decided to study music and entered the Paris Conservatory in 1879 where he studied first with Jules Massenet and later Cesar Franck. His friend Vincent d'Indy introduced him to the music of Wagner. Scholars generally divide his work into three periods, early, middle and late. His very early works tend to show the influence of Massenet. In those which come later there is also the influence of Franck and Wagner.

Chausson began work on his **String Quartet in c minor, Op.35** in 1897. At the time of his death in 1899, it still was not finished although he had completed the first two movements and most of the third movement which was to serve as the finale. Vincent d'Indy was so impressed by the work that he felt compelled to complete it, which he did based on the sketches by Chausson. The opening movement, *Grave-moderé* begins in very somber fashion with the cello taking the lead. It begins by quoting the opening to Debussy's string quartet but soon modulates into c minor. Critics have wondered whether this was an attempt by Chausson to one up his former friend by showing him what could be done with such a promising theme. The overall mood of the rest of the movement is stormy and dramatic without any respite except for the end which concludes with introductory subject heard in the Grave. The second movement, *Très calme*, is a lovely lyrical idyll in which some have heard the Tarnhelm theme from Wagner's *Das Rheingold*. The finale, *Gaiement, pas trop vite*, begins with a kind of march. The music is lively and while not all that jolly, it is certainly less grim than the opening movement. It conjures up the aura of a saga or traveling music. This is an impressive work and one can understand why d'Indy felt compelled to complete it. He knew that it deserved performance and felt that it was perhaps the finest quartet by a Frenchman from this period. It is a shame that one does not hear it in concert for it is every bit as good as the Debussy, the Ravel



Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842) was born Florence. He studied at the conservatories in Bologna and Milan and remained in Italy until 1788 when he moved to Paris, where he lived for the rest of his life. He made his name as a composer of opera, but by 1805 Parisian tastes had changed and the heavy, serious operas that he, Gluck and others had been writing fell out of fashion. Cherubini then turned to religious and instrumental music. He served as director of the Paris Conservatory from 1822 until his death and was regarded as one of France's leading musicians. Beethoven in 1817 wrote that he considered Cherubini the greatest living composer.

Although **String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major** was composed in 1814, it did not receive publication until 1836. While it eventually became popular, this did not happen immediately. Reviewing it in the influential *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Schumann admitted that the style of this quartet was difficult to understand and not in the traditional language of chamber music as pioneered by Haydn and Mozart and continued by Beethoven, Onslow and Mendelssohn. He was correct in this assessment. Cherubini's style owes nothing to the Vienna Classics but was derived from the dramatic tradition of Paris opera and to a lesser

degree the Quatuor Brillant. This can definitely be heard in the first two movements. The first movement has a lengthy, almost symphonic Adagio introduction. The main part of the movement, Allegro, retains this style. Speaking of this movement Schumann noted, "On first hearing, I found it disquieting, some parts operatic and overdone, others bare, trivial and tenacious. It took several hearings for me to appreciate it." The second movement, Larghetto sans lenteur, is in the form of a theme and variations. The theme is in the nature of a prayer, soft and hesitant, eventually there is a strong dramatic outburst, much in the style as one found in the works for the Parisian Opera at that time. It was the Scherzo, with what Schumann called "its fanciful Spanish theme" which convinced him that the quartet was something special. The cello, with its double-stops, creates a guitar-like background, over which the violin presents the dance-like melody. The exotic rhythm patterns do the rest. The trio is a Mendelssohnian elves dance, however, since Cherubini composed it when Mendelssohn was but 5, it would probably be more accurate to call Mendelssohn's movements "Cherubinian." Schumann called the finale, Allegro assai, "a glittering diamond that was resplendent from every angle." It begins with a brief muscular introduction before the theme with its bumptious, unorthodox rhythm is stated. The second theme is lyrical and dramatic with the first violin and cello trading lines as in an operatic duet. There is a strong symphonic element to this powerful music. This quartet is quite unlike anything from its period, and rhythmically resembles no one else.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major started out life as a symphony composed in 1815 for the London Philharmonic Society. Some fourteen years later, he returned to it adding new material and an entire new movement, setting it for string quartet. The work opens with a long, romantic introduction which is followed by the main section, an Allegro, in the style of an overture, its orchestral roots are there for all to hear. The second movement, Lent, begins with a recitative of dramatic character, which colors the entire movement. It is highly emotional but is interrupted suddenly on a number of occasions which was typical of Italian opera composers of that period. A short orchestral sounding Scherzo comes next, bursting with energy but short on compelling thematic material. A contrasting trio section in the minor is characterized by competing rhythms and a breathless execution. The virile and powerful finale, Allegro assai, again sounds more like it would be suited to a string orchestra than a quartet. There are echoes of Beethoven, especially the fugal episode in the middle section of the movement. Not among his best.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor was composed in 1834 and is in four movements. From the very opening notes of the Allegro commodo, we hear the depth of thought. A short recitative in the first violin is answered by the cello before the noble and boldly rhythmic main theme makes its entrance. The second subject is pure Italian melody with an unusual rhythmic accompaniment giving the music an almost Spanish flavor. The second movement, Larghetto sostenuto, might be an aria from an Italian opera. The lovely bel canto melody is given a very expressive accompaniment. In the third movement, Scherzo, allegro, one can tell that Cherubini had Beethoven as his model--and not the Op.18 quartets which was all that Reicha or Onslow could understand--but the Late Quartets. The serious and syncopated main theme is given to the cello and viola to introduce. There is a brash energy to it. The middle section features a polonaise. The finale, Allegro risoluto, although in the major, maintains the sense of energy of the previous movement. This is a superb work which belongs in the repertoire and in concert halls. Skilled ensemble amateur players will also enjoy this work.

String Quartet No.4 in E Major was completed in 1835 when Cherubini was 75 years old. It is the first of three which have been referred to as his "Late Quartets". Although composed only a year after his Third Quartet, it represents a total change of style and approach to the string quartet form. The composer has

become more interested in counterpoint and in extensively developing the possibilities of his theme which tend to be more austere than the operatic melodies which often occur in the earlier works. In many ways, these so called "Late Quartets" show Cherubini to be attempting the same sort of journey that Beethoven embarked upon in composing his own Late Quartets. The big first movement, Allegro maestoso, is entirely dominated by its powerful main theme and its extensive development and contrapuntal treatment as well as its forward moving rhythms. The dark, brooding quality with which the second movement, Larghetto, begins brings Late Beethoven to mind. An Italianesque melody finally appears only to be dissected by rhythmic exploration. A powerful rhythmic phrase serves to introduce what is entitled, Scherzo, but it quickly dissipates into a rather quiet, unscherzo-like chorale. Again, there is an unmistakable similarity to Late Beethoven. The finale, Allegro assai, begins in the same austere fashion as the earlier movements, but soon the thematic material brightens, however, the treatment of the voices is extraordinarily independent. Our of nowhere, Cherubini, creates a serenade interlude which provides an amazing contrast. It is an important work by an independent thinker. While Beethoven's Late Quartets have little trouble being grasped by audiences because they have been played so often, this is not the case with this work and audiences may well not warm to it.

String Quartet No.5 in F Major was composed not long after No.4 in 1835. In the first movement, begins with a quiet prelude leading to an Allegro of chromaticism which anticipates Wagner and the displays daring harmonies are advanced for the time. The second movement, Adagio, is very simple and flowing affair. The third movement, Scherzo, sounds rather Beethovenian while the trio section, in the major, is a kind of solo-capriccio for the first violin. And one is again somewhat reminded of the famous fugue in Beethoven's ninth quartet (Op.59 No.3) as one listens to the Finale of this quartet, in which the composer also employs the fugue now and then. One cannot help but wonder if Cherubini had studied Beethoven's Late Quartets which were less than a decade old. Perhaps more suitable for audiences than No.4 but certainly players are going to need more than one go through to get much from it.

Cherubini was 77 years old when he finished his **String Quartet No.6 in a minor** in 1837. Few composers this age penned a work as vigorous as this one. It is full of the drama and agitation one would have expected from a much younger man. The first movement, Allegro moderato, has for its main theme an impressive lyrical melody. The development brings interesting modulations. The following Andante grazioso is especially beautiful with its rich tonalities. The Scherzo which comes next is quite powerful while the trio section is graceful and rather unusual from a rhythmic standpoint. The finale, Allegro affettuoso, begins quite energetically but soon we encounter elegiac episodes in which the main themes of the three preceding movements briefly make their appearance before the quartet is brought to a close by a short, brilliant coda. More attention and consideration ought to be paid to this fine work. More approachable than any of his other quartets. Good for concert as well as amateurs.



Emanuel Chvala (1851-1924) was born in Prague. He was trained and worked as a railway engineer and was only able to compose in his spare time much like Borodin. Surprisingly, he was able to compose a sizeable amount of music and unlike Borodin who had Rimsky Korsakov to help him, Chvala had no such help. He was fortunate in being able to study composition with two fine composers and teachers—Zdenek Fibich and Josef Bohuslav Forster.

His **String Quartet No.1 in d minor** was composed in 1886. Straightforward, well put together and presenting no technical

problems, this quartet can be recommended to amateur players. The work begins with a charming Allegro moderato. The second movement is a fleet Scherzo, presto with contrasting trio. Next comes a melancholy Andante. The finale is a jovial Allegro vivace with Bohemian melodies. **String Quartet No.2 in c minor** came the following year in 1887. Again, a work which sounds good, is not hard to play and has good melodic material. As such it too should be of interest to amateurs. The opening movement, Allegro assai alternates between its desolate main theme with its aura of tragedy and a lively, dramatic dance-like melody. The second movement is beautiful, somewhat religious sounding, Adagio cantabile. An Allegro commodo serves as a scherzo, is actually more like an old fashioned, grave minuet. The finale, Allegro moderato, also with Bohemian melodic material requires good ensemble playing. These are solid quartets, but it is hard to see that they are likely to be presented in concert.



Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) was born in London, the product of a mixed race marriage, his father, a doctor, being an African from Sierra Leone and his mother a white Englishwoman. His father returned to Africa when he was a small boy and he was brought up by his mother in Croydon. His musical talent showed itself early and he was admitted to study the violin at the Royal College of Music where he eventually concentrated on

composition when his gifts were ascertained. His teacher was the renowned composer, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. He and his compositions gained considerable fame during his lifetime. His oratorio *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* for a time became as popular as Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. He made several visits to the United States because of his interest in American Negro cultural life. His fame was such that on one visit he was invited to the White House by Theodore Roosevelt.

The **Fantasy Pieces or Fantasiestücke**, to use the German name first coined by Schumann, were composed in 1898. The tradition of fantasy pieces was well-established by the time Coleridge-Taylor came to compose his. They would be a set of character pieces, each of a different mood and type. The opening piece, aptly titled *Prelude* begins in a restless somewhat agitated fashion but it is immediately replaced by a calmer subject. The rest of the movement is taken with an interplay between the two. The *Serenade* which follows is quite lyrical with each phrase elided seamlessly in to the following one. Next comes a scherzo, *Humoresque*, which seems to have a vague Bohemian aura to it. A stately and elegant *Minuet* with its diffident trio section serves as the fourth piece. The themes of the exciting finale, *Dance*, are loosely related to those of the opening *Prelude*. This highly effective work which would do well on the concert stage and will certainly be found enjoyable by amateurs.



Aaron Copeland (1900-1990) was born in Brooklyn, New York. He is one of the best known American composers of the 20th century. Chamber music was not his métier and interested him but little. However, during the 1920s, much of which he spent in Paris studying with Nadia Boulanger, he did compose **Two Pieces for String Quartet**.

Boulanger's favorite composer was Gabriel Fauré and Copeland came to admire him as well. The two pieces were composed separately and they were not intended to be an item. It was only much later that he paired the two movements. The first piece, *Lento Molto* is concerned with a kind of study of chords with mild dissonances added. Occasional snippets of melody are shared between players. Boulanger thought it was a masterpiece. I am not sure what drug she was

on at the time she made that assessment but to me it seems little more than ordinary and not particularly interesting. The second movement is better, at least from the standpoint of interest. Entitled *Rondino*. It was composed in 1923 and dedicated to Gabriel Fauré, then nearing his 78th birthday. It is mostly lively and playful and consists of several sections. The considerable use of synchopation, lends it a jazzy feeling which may be put down to the fact that Paris, at the time, was all agog with the new le Jazz hot. If it were not by a famous composer, I do not think it would be heard in concert or recorded both of which it is.



I can think of no other composer who rose to the rank of Rear Admiral other than **Jean Cras** (1879-1932). Although Rimsky Korsakov and Albert Roussel did stints in the navy, they did not spend their entire working lives in it. Cras and his music, once recognized as an important link to the French post-romantics, sank into oblivion after the Second World War. He was born into a musical family with a long tradition of naval service. By

six, he began composing short piano pieces, but despite his obvious talent enrolled in the Naval Academy at the age of 17. Initially self-taught in theory, orchestration, and composition, in 1899 Cras was able to study formally with Henri Duparc who declared him to be one of the most gifted musicians he had ever met. Jean Cras' greatest problem as a composer was that his naval career left him with a chronic lack of time to compose.

His **String Quartet** was composed in 1909 and bears the dedication *To My Brittany*. The lengthy opening movement, *Lente*, allegro, begins in a diffident manner with no tonal center, something which characterizes most of the work. The passionate faster section shows the influence of the impressionists. Never uniformly fast, the tempi vary throughout. The slow movement, *Calme*, though mainly reflective, does eventually rise to a passionate high point in its middle section. A scherzo, *Vite et léger; modéré*, begins with strumming chords to a lively tune. It is the most attractive and, along with the finale, the most accessible of the movements. A muted and mysterious middle section provides an excellent contrast. The finale, *Lento*, allegro molto, begins in a highly individualistic manner. Tonally wayward, the slow introduction quickly leads to a powerful, fast moving main theme, consisting primarily of running triplets. It is less French-sounding than the other movements. Here, Cras shows himself abreast of the developments from Central Europe. Full of mood swings and changes of tempi, this is an excellent example of Cras' masterful compositional technique. Not always ingratiating, nonetheless, it is interesting and perhaps deserving of concert performance. Not particularly a good choice for amateurs.

Not a lot is known about **Anton (sometimes Antal) Csermak** (1774-1822). He is claimed by the Hungarians but he may have been a Czech from Bohemia. What is known was that he was a violinist active as a teacher and concertmaster of various theater orchestras in Vienna and later in Budapest. In the last half of the 18th century a style of Hungarian music known as the *Verbunkos* came into vogue. Its origins can be found in the music used to recruit soldiers and by 1800 it came to symbolize the Hungarian national consciousness. The *Verbunkos* were little more than loud dance music played by marching bands. Csermak as a classical trained musician attempted to combine the style of the *Verbunkos* with the Viennese Classicism with which he was familiar in an attempt to create genuinely Hungarian chamber music. He is generally regarded as one of the pioneers of creating such music. Among the most important of these was his **Die drohende Gefahr oder die Vaterlandsliebe** (the Threatening Danger or Love of the Fatherland) which dates from 1809. The title refers to

an uprising by the Hungarian nobility against the Napoleonic army then occupying Hungary, then part of Austria which was at war with France. The insurrection was quickly put down by the French but gave impetus to the nascent consciousness of Hungarian nationalism and resulted in an outpouring of poetry, literature and musical works. It is programmatic work in nine sections recounting the invasion and battle. Very atmospheric to say the least. For concert only as a historical rarity. But amateurs will find it a lot of fun. His other work **Six Hungarian Dances** date from 1810 and were dedicated to Count Festetics one of the great Hungarian patron of the arts. The dances are charming and give a picture of early Hungarian classical music.



Cesar Cui (1835-1918) was born in Vilnius then part of the Russian Empire and today part of Lithuania. Cui's father Antoine Leonard Queuille (later Russified as Anton Leonardovich Cui) was a French army officer who served in the Napoleonic invasion of 1812. Taken prisoner and released after the French defeat, he did not make it all the way back from Moscow to France but came to a halt in Vilna as Vilnius was then known. He settled down

there, took a Polish woman for his wife and eventually became a Russian citizen, later being raised to the nobility. Cesar was one of five children. He and his brothers were all given the names of great military men—Alexander, Napoleon and so forth. But unlike so many other composers, the young Cesar showed no extraordinary musical talent. Nevertheless, he was given violin and piano lessons by local teachers. Though at 14, he had started to compose small works, his father did not have a musical career in mind for him and at the age of 16, Cesar was sent to St Petersburg to an engineering college. After graduating, he entered the army as an instructor in fortifications and remained there for the rest of his active life rising to the rank of general and became a professor of military science. Among his many students were several members of the Imperial family, including the future Tsar Nicolas II. Cui's writing on the subject of military fortification made him famous and his reputation as an authority on this subject far outshone his name as a composer. Interestingly, today virtually no one knows of these accomplishments and he is only remembered as a composer, one who was part of a group of Russian nationalist composers who came to be known as the Mighty Five. (Rimsky Korsakov, Borodin, Mussorgsky, Balakirev and Cui) As for his music, he is remembered only for one short work *Oriente*, the 9th of 24 miniatures for violin and piano which were eventually published in a collection as his *Op.50* under the title *Kaleidoscope*. This one piece lasting but a few minutes has achieved world-wide fame and has appeared in dozens of different arrangements. Nor is he remembered for his work as a music critic, but during his lifetime, he was one of the most prominent and influential, achieving a considerable reputation both within Russia and throughout Europe. In 1856 while doing graduate work in St. Petersburg, Cui met Mily Balakirev who encouraged him to seriously consider a career as a composer. At this point, Cui started to compose works on a larger scale. But it is difficult to understand how he could have composed more than 200 works, many of them sizeable such as operas, in the following decades, all the while either on active military duty or working as a professor. When one asks why he is not today better known as a composer, the answer most often heard is that he was not particularly talented when it came to large scale works, his operas being a case in point. And unlike the other members of the Mighty Five, he did not compose symphonies or orchestral tone poems. As far as chamber music goes, Cui composed some 16 works, including three string quartets. It is interesting to reflect, that with the exception of Borodin, Arensky and Gliere, the best string quartets of the Russian Nationalist School are not by its best

known composers but mostly by its lesser known members. For a start, Balakirev and Mussorgsky did not write any quartets and those of Rimsky Korsakov and Glazunov are not particularly inspired or appealing, certainly not placed alongside those of Blumenfeld, the first 2 Gretchaninovs, Kopylov, Persiani, Pogojeff, Sokolov, the first Steinberg, Alexander Taneyev (his cousin Sergei was, like Tchaikovsky, no Russian nationalist), the early quartets of Zolotarev and last but not least Cesar Cui.

The most Russian sounding of Cui's three string quartets is the first, **String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.45**. It was completed in 1893, by which time Cui was no youngster, but 58 entering the last part of his long musical as well as military career. In the first movement, *Allegro risoluto*, not only the thematic material but also the rhythm of the main theme gives the music an undeniable Russian flavor. It suggests Russian sea music or perhaps the galloping of horses. Either way, it immediately captures the listener's attention and is developed by Cui in such an ingenious way as to hold that attention throughout the movement. The second theme is lyrical but also very Russian and provides an excellent contrast to the first. It is worth noting that the part writing, not only in this movement but throughout the quartet, is really excellent. The supporting parts and harmonies are quite good but what is even more pleasing for each of the players is that the melodic material is divided virtually equally among the four voices and each gets ample opportunities to shine. Cui places a piquant, fleet Scherzo, *Allegro non troppo*, next. Against a light, pulsing accompaniment, the viola presents a very deliberate theme, again quite Russian and perhaps taken from a peasant folkdance. Eventually, the music reaches a feverish pitch of excitement and one can well image exuberant peasants stomping out the dance at a rustic wedding. A slow movement, *Andantino*, in some ways recalling Borodin, while in no way being imitative comes next. The middle section, *Andante un poco religioso*, is somewhat more somber and rather impressive in its beauty. The finale, *Allegro non troppo*, with its exciting accompaniment rhythm in the first violin, along with the actual theme presented by the cello, give the music a highly Russian flavor. The second theme, is a total surprise and perhaps inappropriate as without warning the Russian sailor's song of the opening theme gives way to the music of Spain—and recalls Bizet's opera *Carmen*! It superb use *spiccato*, certainly almost sounds as if Bizet had penned it. Yet, against all odds it somehow works and is not jarring as it sounds on paper. Though some might not agree, in my opinion, this is the most memorable of his three quartets as the thematic material makes the strongest impression. It must be admitted that, technically speaking, this is not a work for beginning ensemble players, but experienced amateurs will find it well within their means and quite rewarding. In the concert hall is sure to enjoy a triumph from their audience.

Fourteen years were to pass before Cui returned to the string quartet genre. His **String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.68**, composed in 1907 begins with an *Andante* introduction and then seamlessly transforms into an *Allegretto*. The music is charming and graceful, but not compelling. Still, it is worth noting that there were very few composers who at 72 were producing works of similar quality. It is charming, ingratiating and a perfect example of what the composers of the Belaiev circle, mostly students of Rimsky Korsakov, were producing. It is, without doubt, better than what the young Glazunov was producing in the 1880's but it does not match the works of Kopylov or Sokolov, to name but two of the circle. Next comes a scherzo, *Vivace non troppo*. It is pleasant, very well done and more engaging than the first movement. Appealing though it is, it can not be called exciting. The third movement, *Andante*, begins in quiet, somewhat sad fashion. The treatment is rather good with the main theme first being given out by the first violin and then handed off to the cello. The whole thing is rather promising, especially at a change in tempo, where the cello breaks loose in dramatic fashion and is soon sup-

ported by the viola. It is perhaps the best episode of the entire work. Unfortunately, the moment is soon over, and what follows, while not exactly trite, is a considerable let down from drama Cui had so finely created. And, sad to say, when we come to the finale, *Allegro non troppo*, trite or banal are perhaps applicable. The main theme is based on a Russian folk song. There is a lot of needless sawing and chordal playing but the treatment is weak, in fact, the main melody itself is rather threadbare, and Cui is unable to hide this fact. I do not think it too harsh to say that the finale mars what otherwise might be an acceptable work. Though not strong enough for the concert hall it can be recommended to amateurs and is easier to play than No.1.

When Cui finished his final string quartet, **String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major, Op.91** his age was almost as high as the quartet's opus number. He was a little short of his 79th birthday. It was 1913, but there is nothing to indicate this fact and the quartet might well have been composed in 1875. Though seven years separate the Second from the Third Quartet, there are considerable similarities between the two and one might almost think that they were composed one after the other. The opening bar of the Andante introduction sounds a bit as if the players are tuning up. The introduction creates a certain sense of expectation, if not suspense. The music of the main section, *Allegro*, is pleasing and appealing, and while not particularly exciting, it does tend to hold one's interest. In part this is due to Cui's use of an unusually rhythmic ostinato accompaniment, at one point, in the cello. Further, there is a quote from Tchaikovsky's massive piano trio. Hard to know for sure if this was intentional, but one must assume that Cui, as a leading music critic and reviewer, would have been familiar with the piano trio. The second movement *Scherzo, Allegro non troppo*, is very accomplished from a technical standpoint and makes a stronger impression than the first movement. The trio section provides a fine contrast. All in all a first rate movement. The third movement, *Andantino*, without question, is the strongest of the entire work. In part, this is due to the tempo, however, the melody itself is a true Shepherd's Plaint, expertly treated. Here is a movement which can stand comparison to any of those produced by his Belaiev Circle compatriots, which makes it all the more poignant when we come to finale. Once again, one can say that Cui has "run out of gas" or at the very least been very unfortunate in his choice of a main theme for his finale. The *Allegro* in 6/8 is some sort of children's folk song or dance. Banal is a suitable term for it. And it must be said that it ruins what has come before, and even the second theme, which is noticeably better, cannot save the situation. This is frustrating, to be sure. What has come before is good, well worth hearing and even deserving of occasional concert performance, but no professional group is going to traipse onto a concert stage and play a work with a finale like this. Can the quartet be recommended to amateurs? Yes, certainly based on its first three movements. And while the main theme of the finale is unfortunate, its treatment is professionally handled and the second theme is of higher quality and of more interest.



Carl Czerny (1781-1857) is a name known to all pianists but not to many string quartet players. He was born in Vienna and studied piano and composition with Beethoven. He became one of the most important pianists and teachers during the first decades of the 19th century. A prolific composer of more than 1000, the great bulk for piano, he nonetheless composed a fair amount of chamber music, including per-

haps as many as 20. While several were published during his lifetime, most remain in the library of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. Only a few of these works have opus numbers. Among these are a few so called quatuor brillants. But there

are several standard quartets which are well worth playing. Czerny composed in the tradition of Haydn and Beethoven. Mendelssohn was clearly influenced by the music of Czerny. I have heard seven of these quartets on CD, which were played off of manuscript copies and all of them are impressive. Full of lovely melodies for which Czerny clearly had a gift. The word was back in 2019 that several were in the process of being published. But as of this writing (2023) only one a Quartet in c minor, has been



Nancy Dalberg (1881-1949) was born in the Danish town of Drosselbjerg on the island of Fyn where she leaned to play the piano. Her father, a well-off industrialist, refused her wish to study at the Royal Conservatory in Copenhagen and in the end she took private composition lessons from Johan Svendsen, Fini Henriques and Carl Nielsen. She composed three string quartets. No.1 in 1915, No.2 in 1922 and No.3 in 1927. I am only familiar with

String Quartet No.2 in g minor, Op.14. Interestingly, when it was originally published, she did not include her first name because of the widely held bias against women composers. The opening *Moderato—Allegro vivo* begins with an ominous theme, based on a turn in the cello's lowest register. It builds quickly to a climax wherein the others soon join. This is a big and passionate movement always tonal and certainly more accessible than Nielsen's later quartets. An *Allegro scherzando*, is very modern sounding, wayward tonally, but quite clever. Next comes an *Andante con moto e cantabile*. This is truly a brilliant example of mixing episodes of very wayward tonality with traditional melody. At times rising to high passion, at other times falling back, this music effortlessly helps to extend one's range of hearing and appreciation of tonality to its outer limits. In the last movement, *Allegro molto e con spirito*, there is perhaps a touch of Nielsen but without the foreknowledge that he was her teacher, one might not reach this conclusion. While good, the movement gets off to a somewhat unfocused beginning and is not quite up to the very high standard of the others, although it picks up as it moves along to convincing conclusion. A first rate work which deserves to be heard in the concert hall. Only for top notch amateur players.



Charles Dancla (1817-1907) was born in the French town of Bagnères-de-Bigorre in Bordeaux. Dancla entered the Paris Conservatory where he studied violin with Pierre Balliot and composition with Halevy. He became a famous violinist and professor at the Paris Conservatory. A prolific composer, he wrote 14 string quartets, the first in 1838, the last in 1900. In addition, he wrote three so called easy

quartets, Op.208 not included in this number. His career as a soloist and orchestral musician blossomed in Paris until 1848 when the Revolution caused him to leave the capital and take work as a postmaster. This happenstance, however, gave him the needed time to compose. For the following 10 years he was able to devote himself to this and he produced several chamber works. His **String Quartet No. 8 in G Major, Op.87** dates from his last year in the postal service, 1857. It is the only quartet of his with which I am familiar. The Quartet won him first prize in a Bordeaux competition, and in part, led to his appointment as a professor of violin at the Paris Conservatory. The French, during the so-called Second Empire period, considered Dancla to be Onslow's successor. However, unlike Onslow, whose works clearly show the influence of Beethoven and other contemporaries, Dancla moved no farther than Haydn and Mozart who for the most part served as his models. The first violin part is rather dominant but this is not a Quatuor Brillant. The other parts do get some chance beyond playing mere accompaniment. Particularly

fine is the minuet marked *Molto moderato e fieramente*. The finale, a spirited whirling affair, is also very well executed. A work more suited for amateur players than the concert hall.



Franz Danzi (1763-1826) today is only known for his wind quintets which over the past few decades have been resuscitated and gained popularity among wind players for their ease of performance and fine melodic writing. However, he wrote works in virtually every genre. His chamber music includes sextets, quintets, quartets and trios, some for strings, some for wind instruments and some for a combination of the two. He was born near and grew up in Mannheim and studied cello with his father and composition with Abt Vogler before he joined the famous Mannheim orchestra of the Elector in 1778. His career spanned the transition from the late Classical to the early Romantic styles. Danzi knew Mozart and mentored Carl Maria von Weber. In 1783, Danzi succeeded his father as one of the conductors of Elector's orchestra. He eventually rose to the position of Kapellmeister at the courts in Munich and later Stuttgart. His works reflect the style from his own early experience in Mannheim. The **String Quartet in B flat Major, Op.6 No.2** was the second of a set of three first published in 1801. It received the nickname "Figaro Quartet" because Danzi quoted the theme from the aria *Non piu andrai* from Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*. It also quotes from Cherubini's canzona *Voi che sapete*. It is in two movements. The first is marked *Andante* and is actually a theme and set of variations. The concluding movement, *Allegro moderato*, sounds like a lively rendition of scenes from Mozart's opera.

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Félicien David (1810-1876) though widely known in his home country for his spectacular operas, filled with exotic music, elsewhere he is virtually unknown. David was born in the south of France in the town of Cadenet. His early musical education took place there, but much of what he learned was through self-study of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. At the age of 20,

he moved to Paris and entered the Paris Conservatory. While in Paris, he fell under the sway of the Saint-Simonian movement, which he joined. With them, he traveled to Egypt, where he lived for a number of years. Intoxicated with the near east, when he returned to France, he began composing operas which incorporated the melodies he heard there. His exotic-sounding music electrified French audiences and became extraordinarily popular. David, however, also wrote chamber music, something in which French audiences showed little curiosity during the first half of the 19 century. But by mid century, thanks to the pioneering efforts of George Onslow and Louise Farrenc, this was starting to change, and by 1857, David started to compose chamber music in response to this growing interest. His chamber music, unlike his operas, does not feature the exotic and bizarre which made him famous, but instead, they hue tonal the paths established by the classical and romantic composers. Firmly in the romantic camp, David is said to be the link between George Onslow and Saint-Saëns.

String Quartet No. 1 in f minor dates from 1868. In four movements, the piece opens with a moving study in melancholia. The second movement, an *Adagio*, has an enticing folk-song-like theme., There is something of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the fleeting *Scherzo*, perhaps not by accident as David knew and was friendly with Mendelssohn. The masterfully crafted finale, an *Allegretto*, is built around two rustic subjects, ending this charming work on a light note. It would make a good impression in in concert and can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major was compose a year later in 1869. It opens with an appealing *Allegretto* and is followed by a reverential chorale-like *Andante*. The *Scherzo* which comes next combines march themes with slinky passages of the kind Dukas was to write in his *Sorcerer's Apprentice*. A rustic *Allegro* conjures up peasant dances.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor was finished in around 1870. It opens with a genial *Allegro* which sounds little of being in the minor. A calm and reflective *Adagio* follows. A scherzo-like *Allegretto* serves as the third movement. The finale is a jovial *Allegro leggiero*. The last two quartets are can be recommended to amateurs but are not strong enough merit concert.



Perhaps it was coincidence, but **Ferdinand David** (1810-1873) was born in the same house in Hamburg as Felix Mendelssohn one year later. The two became colleagues and friends. David studied violin with the famous virtuoso Louis Spohr. He served as concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under the baton of Mendelssohn and held the position of Professor of Violin at the Leipzig Conservatory. Among his many famous students were Joseph Joachim and August Wilhelmj. His name has endured as the editor of several famous chamber music works as well as pieces for the violin. Among his compositions still in use are his *Advanced School of Violin Playing* and *Art of Bowing*.

His **String Quartet in a minor, Op.32** appeared in 1862. In four movements, it is in the tradition of Schumann and Mendelssohn, but does not sound like their quartets. The opening movement, *Allegro*, has a fine, long-lined and lilting melody, presented by the viola against a syncopated accompaniment in the other voices. The second theme brings the music to a powerful and dramatic climax. The *Adagio* which follows begins with pregnant pauses. The main theme is an appealing, lyrical melody which is developed with a series of interesting rhythmic variations. Next comes a *Scherzo* with an original lopsided, rhythmic theme that has just a touch of the exotic, of the Orient. An exciting finale, *Allegro molto*, tops off this solid effort. David was the first violin of a well-known quartet and knew how to write it.. It can be recommended for amateurs but not for concert performance.



Carl Davidov (1838-1889) is a name which will be familiar to most cellists. One of the most famous cello virtuoso of all time, Tchaikovsky called him the Tsar of Cellists. Most of his compositions were for the cello. However, he did write one string quartet. His **String Quartet in A Major, Op.38** dates from 1883. The opening *Allegro moderato* is pleasant and the themes, while not particularly gripping, do

have charm. The elegiac main theme of the *Adagio* which comes next captures and keeps one's attention. For contrast, there is a livelier, more upbeat middle section. In third place is a playful *Allegretto* which is a cross between a scherzo and an intermezzo. *Pizzicato* plays a prominent role in it. The finale, *Allegro molto* is jovial but presents ensemble problems. Amateurs might like it, but it does not belong in the concert hall.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) along with Maurice Ravel is the poster child for the French Impressionist movement. From this era his *String Quartet in d minor, Op.10* is quite well-known and is fairly often performed. Much has been written about it and there is no need for me to discuss it here other than to note that those looking for an archetypical French Impressionist string quartet, this one should be given a go.



Frederick Delius (1862-1934) was born in the English city of Bradford to German Parents. As a boy, he studied violin and piano locally, but his father tried, unsuccessfully, to interest him in a career in commerce. Eventually, he was allowed to enter the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied piano with Carl Reinecke and composition with Salomon Jadassohn. After leaving the Conservatory, he settled in France where he remained for the

rest of his life, except during the First World War. He composed in most genres and did not ignore chamber music, writing a string quartet and several instrumental sonatas.

His **String Quartet in e minor** was begun in 1916 and completed later that year. Delius had experimented with string quartet form in 1888 and later in 1892 but these works have survived. The original version of this work had only three movements. Unsatisfied with the quartet, he added an extra movement in the final version which came from his 1888 quartet. The four movements are: 1. With animation; 2. Quick and lightly; 3. Late Swallows, Slow and wistfully; and 4. Very quick and vigorously. The first movement is impressionistic, with rapidly changing harmonies and the continual development of brief melodic fragments. The scherzo has the quality of night music and is characterized by its rhythmic asymmetry. There is a wistful trio section. The third movement, he called Late Swallows and the music does convey a sense of autumnal sound perhaps coupled with images of swallows darting to and fro. The finale starts off in vigorous fashion but devolves into pensiveness. Tastes vary, to be sure. I found it interesting but not exactly compelling. There is a lack of focus which would prevent it from making an impression in concert. It is not beyond amateurs but I am not recommending it per se.



Otto Dessooff (1835-1892) was born in Leipzig and entered the conservatory there where he studied composition, piano and conducting with some of the foremost teachers of the day. It was as a conductor that he primarily established his reputation. By 19, he was theater director in Dusseldorf and a mere 5 years later was offered a guest position with the premiere theater of the time, the Vienna Court Opera House. In

Vienna, he became friends with Brahms and later was to premiere several of that composer's orchestral works. Although he had composed some works during the 1850's and early 60's, he gave up composing when his career as a conductor blossomed.

In 1878, the urge came upon him again to compose and among other things he produced his **String Quartet in F Major, Op.7**. Though it met with success in its premiere, Dessooff was still not sure it was worth publishing and sent the score to Brahms asking for his candid opinion and offering to dedicate to him. Brahms wrote back praising the work and said, "...you would do me a great honor by writing my name over the quartet title—if need be then, we'll take the blows together should the public find it not to their liking." Much gratified, Dessooff wrote back—and the measure of their friendship can be seen in this free and bantering reply, exactly the sort Brahms himself was fond of writing, "...you will be relieved to see your name on the title page of the quartet preserved for posterity. When people have forgotten your German Requiem, people will then say, 'Brahms'? Oh yes, he's the one to whom Dessooff's Op.7 is dedicated!" In four movements, the opening Allegro ben moderato begins with a joyous first theme. The second theme is quite Brahmsian in flavor. A unisono pizzicato introduction begins a somber, almost funeral-like, march Larghetto. This is very original in conception. A second subject is both more lyrical and optimistic in mood. The short third movement, Poco Andante, is a slow but sunny waltz

with a cleverly contrasting scherzando. The finale, Allegro con brio, opens with a cascading Brahms-like melody and proceeds jovially to a happy ending. Although this is only an opus seven, Dessooff was close to 40 at the time he composed this piece, and though it is marked by youthful vitality throughout, it is clearly the work of a very mature and accomplished composer. One imagines that this is what one of Brahms' quartets might have sounded like if he had allowed one of the earlier ones to survive. This quartet ought to be played in concert. Though one hears the influence of Brahms, it is nonetheless fresh and original sounding and is certainly rhythmically more straight forward than Brahms.

Amateurs also will get great pleasure from this fine work.



Constantin Dimitrescu (1847-1928) is one of Romania's most important composers from its late romantic period. Born in Blejoi-Prahova, a small town not far from Bucharest, he was taken to the capital at an early age once his musical talent was recognized. There he studied cello and composition with the best teachers available. Funds were subsequently made available for him to continue his education in Vienna and then later in

Paris where he studied with, among others, the famous cello virtuoso Auguste Franchomme. Upon his return to Bucharest, he became principal cellist of the Bucharest Philharmonic and also of the National Theater Orchestra. In later years, he served as conductor for both. He was also engaged as a professor at the Bucharest Conservatory. Despite his many occupations and duties, Dimitrescu nevertheless found time to compose orchestral and operatic works as well as chamber music. In fact, it was his great love of chamber music which led him to found Bucharest's first permanent string quartet. He served as its cellist for many years. Thus it comes as no surprise to find that throughout his long musical life, Dimitrescu composed string quartets, most sources say five a few say seven. I have seen five published. I will discuss three of these as they are typical of the rest.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.21 dates from 1883. It is full of tuneful melodies which, particularly in the outer movements, are presented in quite an exciting fashion. The opening Allegro moderato begins with a stately theme which soon picks up momentum. The following Adagio non troppo, which serves as the slow movement, is really more in the nature of an intermezzo. The title and tempo marking to the third movement, Moderato, is somewhat misleading in that the music is clearly a brisk and somewhat muscular minuet. It is in the excellent finale, Allegro moderato, that Dimitrescu clearly demonstrates his compositional skills. The development of the fetching and joyful main theme undergoes several changes and even includes a fugue. This fine quartet is only of modest technical difficulty and should be of especial interest to amateur quartet players.

String Quartet No.2 in d minor, Op.26 dates from 1885. It is full of tuneful melodies. The opening Moderato begins with a restless, yearning theme. Suddenly a gorgeous, sunny melody brightens the mood, later a playful third subject appears. The second movement, Adagio non troppo, is tinged with Mendelssohnian sadness and includes a very melancholy section marked lamentoso which over tremolo accompaniment rises to a climax before fading away. Next comes a hard driving, Menuetto, moderato. The quartet is topped off with a very dramatic and exciting finale, Allegro appassionato. Written by a string player who was an accomplished quartetter, this work sounds well and plays easily. It is strong enough for the occasional concert hall outing, especially as there is virtually no chamber music from by Romanian composers of this period. Amateurs will find it enjoyable.

String Quartet No.4 in g minor, Op.38 dates from 1889 and is in four movements. The opening Allegro moderato, begins with a searching melody in the first violin over a pulsing accom-

paniment. Tension is built until the introduction of a brighter dance-like theme. The striking second movement, *Adagio non troppo*, has for its main theme a sad, peaceful subject. Slowly the moving accompaniment in the cello builds suspense until suddenly a powerful, driving Romanian episode interrupts proceeds, only to fade away with the return of the main theme over a muted tremolo accompaniment. Next comes a *Menuetto*, harking back to the classical era. The finale, *Allegro un poco agitato*, starts off with an exotic, orientale dance theme. It is followed by a operatic theme which has tinges of Rossini. Not hard and fun to play, recommended for amateurs but not for concert.



Karl (Carl) Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739-1799) was born in Vienna and was recognized as a child prodigy on the violin and one of the great violin virtuosos of the 18th century. The first part of his life was spent as a touring virtuoso and especially in Italy he enjoyed many triumphs. The second half of his life was spent as a composer and music director at various aristocratic courts. His output was voluminous and he is regarded as one of the more important representative composers of the Vienna Classical era. Originally, his music showed the influence of the Italians but as time went by his familiarity with the compositions of Mozart and Haydn greatly changed his compositional style. He knew both men personally and the three of them sometimes performed string quartets in Vienna along with Vanhal. Dittersdorf played first violin, Haydn second violin, Mozart viola and Vanhal played cello. He wrote six string quartets, but none of them can be compared to anything either Mozart or Haydn wrote after 1780.

The strongest of the six is his **String Quartet No.1 in D Major**. It is not at all certain that it was the first of the series of six he wrote roughly at the same time. It is widely regarded as his masterpiece, perhaps because of the excellence of the part writing, however, some of the others are charming and also are worthwhile. His quartets date from his middle period. By this time Dittersdorf had turned away from the Italian school of composition and has adopted the Mannheim style which both Mozart and Haydn did during the 1770's and which eventually developed in the style we now call Vienna Classic. Typical of Mannheim works the quartets all have three movements. The opening *Moderato* starts off in a sedate fashion, but gradually, the music becomes more lively although it always retains an unhurried air. If one were to ask for a typical example of the Viennese Classical Minuet, one could not do better than the middle movement, *Menuetto* which follows. It is stately and eminently dance-like. The trio section is darker in tone. The finale, a *Presto*, from its first note quickly rushes off. This is a good work from the middle classical era which would make a fine program selection as an alternative to some Haydn's earlier quartets such as the *Op.33*. Also recommended to amateurs looking for a performance work.

String Quartet No.2 in B flat Major is the second of a set of six which were completed in 1788 and published the following year. Though certainly familiar with the style of Haydn and Mozart with whom he was friends, like Ignaz Pleyel, he chose to ignore the four movement layout favored by them and opted for the Mannheim style which typically had three movements. The work opens with a genial *Moderato* which actually is closer in tempo to an *Allegro*. All of the voices share in the thematic material. The middle movement, marked *Andante*, begins in calm fashion. A lovely serenade-like section follows. The finale, *Tema con variazione*, has an engaging Theme and a fine set of variations. Could be performed in concert, and suitable for amateurs.

The opening movement to **String Quartet No.3 in G Major** is marked *Moderato*, but it is more in the nature of an *allegro*. A small fugue is inserted between themes. The second movement,

Menuetto, moderato, begins is another excellent example of a typical minuet from this period. The trio provides contrast. The finale, *Presto*, is an early example of a rondo. There are 2 *Alternativos* and a coda. Not for concert or worth the time of amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in C Major opens with a propulsive *Allegro*. The middle movement, *Menuetto, allegro assai*, begins in march-like fashion and has several musette interludes with the cello's double stops creating a bagpipe effect. The finale, *Andante e con gusto*, is a folk song like theme with a set of four finely wrought variations and an *Allegro* coda. Suitable for amateurs.

The opening movement, *Allegro*, to **String Quartet No.5 in E flat Major** immediately reminds one of Mozart's style about the time he was writing *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. The second movement, *Menuetto, non troppo presto*, is another typical Viennese minuet. The trio section, marked *Alternativo*, is faster than the minuet. The finale, *Allegro*, is very lively. Quite interestingly, Dittersdorf inserts a Turkish section, reminiscent of Mozart's Fifth Violin Concerto. Okay for amateurs and perhaps a very occasional concert performance.

String Quartet No.6 in A Major opens with a pleasant and appealing *Moderato*. The middle movement is quite unusual. It is marked *Menuetto, Larghetto*, but minuets were not slow movements. Then suddenly in the middle section a very quick interlude appears without warning. An exciting *Presto* with a mysterious slow section rounds off the quartet. Not strong enough for concert or worth the time of amateurs.



Ignacy Feliks Dobrzynski (1807-67) was the son of a kapellmeister to a Polish count who held much the same duties that Haydn did with the Esterhazys. Training from his father and experience with the count's orchestra provided Dobrzynski's early musical education. Later he went to the Warsaw Conservatory and studied piano and composition with Josef Elsner. While he achieved only moderate success in his native Poland, in Germany, his works were highly praised, and critical reviews in newspapers, such as those in the influential city of Leipzig, were very favorable. He was said to have composed three string quartets, *Op.7, 8 and 13*, I am only familiar the

String Quartet No.1 in e minor, Op.7, which dates from 1828. The opening movement *Allegro espressivo e moderato* suffers from its thematic material which is unmemorable. The second movement, *Scherzo, allegro vivace*, is better and tends to hold one interest. The *Adagio espressivo* which comes next is satisfactory. The melody does not, however, stand out as anything special. The finale, *Presto*, has lots of sawing but is threadbare when it comes to a decent melody. All of this is rather surprising for any familiar with his string quintets, sextet or piano trio, all of which have many fetching melodies. Perhaps, at the age of twenty, he had not found his voice. This is a pretty ordinary work that I cannot recommend. While this quartet has received a modern edition and has been recorded, *No.2* from 1829 and *No.3* remain on the shelves of libraries and have not been performed at anytime within the last century or more.



Ernst von Dohnanyi (also known as Ernő Dohnányi as the Hungarians style it), was born in the Austro-Hungarian town of Pressburg (Pozsony in Hungarian and now Bratislava in Slovakia). Of Dohnanyi (1877-1960), *The New Grove* opines that he was, after Liszt, Hungary's most versatile musician, he was a concert pianist, composer, conductor and teacher, *The New Grove* goes on to say that Dohnanyi must be considered "one of the chief architects of Hungary's musical culture in the

20th century.” Certainly, his chamber music is very fine, with most of it being in the masterwork category. Yet, sadly it has virtually disappeared from the concert stage. After studying locally, he enrolled in the Budapest Academy where composition teacher was Hans Koessler.

His **String Quartet No.1 in A Major, Op.7** was composed in 1899. The influence of Brahms can at times be heard, it is perhaps the most pronounced in the spacious and leisurely opening theme of the first movement, Allegro. Though the tempo marking indicates allegro, really once played through, most performers sense that “moderato” really ought to have been added. This becomes all the more evident when it is contrasted with the lively and staccato second subject. On two occasions, this second theme creates a short scherzo-like episode. The second movement, Allegro grazioso, is an intermezzo which consists of a theme and set of five variations. The theme in c# minor is a delicate march with the first violin given the melody against a pizzicato accompaniment in the other voices. The third movement, Molto adagio con espressione, opens with a noble theme whose development becomes rhythmically quite intricate. The treatment (not the thematic material) of the second subject is reminiscent of Haydn. Rather than a presentation of the theme by one voice, small pieces or snippets are passed between the instruments. Along with the first movement, the finale, Vivace, is the most striking. It begins with a snaky melody, probably of Hungarian origin. Just as striking is the second theme in which the lower three voices play double-stops creating a bagpipe-like effect, whilst the melody in the first violin recalls the sound of oriental or Turkish music. This is a very fine work, though not in the masterwork category, it nonetheless certainly deserves concert performance. There are no real technical difficulties and hence it should definitely be of great interest to amateurs looking for a good, fresh work. From the late romantic period.

String Quartet No.2 in D Flat Major, Op.15 It was originally published in 1906. At the time of publication of the Second String Quartet, Dohnanyi, who had been engaged by Joseph Joachim, was teaching at the Berlin Hochschule. It was premiered by the then famous Klinger Quartet to great critical acclaim. It is in three movements. The first movement, Andante—Allegro, begins with a slow, broad rising 8 measure introduction. But this is no mere preparatory phrase, it is the most important melodic theme of the entire quartet. It is, if you will, the motto-motif of the work. This is immediately interrupted in non-sequitur fashion by a brief five measure Allegro burst of energy. A two measure Adagio which begins on the same note as the motif interrupts the Allegro momentarily before the Allegro is allowed to begin in earnest. It is several measures before one realizes that what appears to be the opening theme of the Allegro is actually the development of the opening motto-motif, but unlike the theme which is calm and peaceful, the development is restless and full of energy. What is particularly striking about this development is the fact that it takes place at a rapid tempo while simultaneously, we periodically hear the main theme, the motto, played at its original slow tempo. So, in fact, it sounds as if one is hearing two widely different tempi at once. It is an extraordinary effect and makes an incredible impression upon the listener. Only with the introduction of the lyrical second theme introduced by the first violin to an important pizzicato accompaniment in the cello is any degree of relaxation achieved. In addition to the simultaneous introduction of two tempi, there is also some of the best interweaving of themes to be found anywhere. A particularly dramatic example of this interweaving occurs toward the end of the Animato with the two violins in their highest registers. It is among the finest moments in the quartet literature. It would be hard to find a greater contrast between two sections than between those of the second movement, Presto acciaccato. The movement, which is essentially a scherzo in 3/4 time, opens with a relentless, driving rhythm in the cello. Superimposed periodically on top of this rhythm are

warning chords in the inner voices which create a menacing mood of evil. Not only does the cello’s rhythm serve as the opening theme, later it is the harmonic accompaniment to the second theme which is introduced by the viola. Though it is rhythmically close and equally as restless as cello’s theme, the second subject nonetheless dispels the gloom of the preceding measures and its further development is quite upbeat and creates a sense of optimism. The trio sections follows immediately without any pause. Marked L’istesso tempo and in 2/4, and though technically the same tempo as the preceding scherzo section, it sounds much slower because it consists entirely of tied half notes. The theme is pristine, and could easily have been marked religioso simplice for it is akin to an innocent choral prayer. The contrast is extreme, to say the least. It is as if one were yanked from hell to heaven all in the course of a few measures. The trio melody is played in unison rhythmically, not tonally by all of the voices except for the second violin who has a series of very soft flowing eighth notes, perhaps a reminder that the scherzo must ultimately return, which, of course, it does to conclude the movement albeit not with any real sense of finality. Apotheosis might well be a suitable subtitle for the final movement to this wonderful quartet. Although beginning Molto Adagio, it cannot merely be called that for it consists of several other important sections. More accurately it should be entitled Molto Adagio—Animato—Adagio—Andante—Allegro. The movement opens in D Major, slowly, hushed and in a mood similar to the trio section of the preceding scherzo. There is the same choral texture and religious quality. At the extremely slow tempo Dohnanyi requires, this 40 measure adagio is not an introduction but nearly a third of the finale. At last, it dies away *ppp*. Then, suddenly, there is a powerful, angry outburst as the Animato dramatically explodes full of passion *ff*. The theme, given to the first violin, is breathtaking and dramatic. The inner voices play impassioned 16th notes not quite tremolo throughout, while the cello growls angrily with a rhythm that is very close to the first theme of the scherzo. In the final part of the Animato, we hear for the first time the entire exposition of the opening Adagio powerfully stated by the viola against an ethereal accompaniment in the violins, playing high on their e strings. Slowly, the Animato peters out and the tempo settles into an adagio. Each of the themes from the preceding movements is slowly brought forth again starting with the rhythmic opening theme to the scherzo. The dramatic high point is reached toward the end of the Andante when it comes time for the restatement of the opening motto. The two violins slowly climb ever higher, the second echoing the first each step of the way. Movement in one voice takes place while the other plays its recurring half notes. At last the pinnacle is reached and the dramatic tension is finally relaxed. The soft, concluding Allegro is a short coda bringing peace and finality. This is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, post-Brahmsian romantic quartet—a superb masterpiece. Nearly all who hear it agree. But sadly, very few are lucky enough to hear it live in concert—an incredible shame. The only recompense is that there are several recordings of it available. And, of course, there is always the option of playing it yourself. Though not easy, it is certainly well within the range of competent and experienced amateurs. I encourage professional quartets to include this fine work in their repertoire and bring it into the concert hall again.

Dohnanyi’s **String Quartet No.3 in a minor, Op.33** dates from 1926 and was composed some twenty years after the Second Quartet by which time the landscape of European music had changed radically from that which had existed before World War I. He employs a different tonal language than that in his earlier works. Though he does not venture into the realm of atonalism, he clearly moves beyond traditional tonality. The big first movement, Allegro agitato e appassionato, begins with a short, traditionally tonal introduction before the main theme is given in full. It is edgy and anxious, and characterized by a sense of nervous energy. One has to really listen quite closely to find what

small traces there are of the Dohnanyi of the earlier works. He does, however, spend a great deal of time interposing the two main themes and then taking parts of each and grafting them together. It is the subsequent development sections which are tonally the most wayward. I do not hear much that could be considered Hungarian from a melodic standpoint although the first theme is treated to some rough-hewn rhythmic sequences that are perhaps Hungarian. The agitation almost rises to the level of violence and the coda does not “let off steam” so much as add a sense of finality, for it, too, is quite passionate. The theme upon which the variations to the second movement, *Andante religioso con variazioni*, is based on a chorale. Here, we can find a direct link to the earlier Dohnanyi. The treatment and mood are very similar to the opening theme of the final movement to the Second Quartet. Certainly, the statement of the theme is solemn though not funereal. The variations, to be successful, could not be expected to maintain such a mood throughout, and they don't. Here, Dohnanyi has tonally retreated a bit as this movement is not so dissimilar from the Theme and Variations of his Op.10 String Trio that were for the time (1904) very advanced tonally. □□The concluding *Vivace giocoso*, though it does have a certain edginess to it, is not harsh but mostly light and upbeat. The main theme is based on a rising chromatic motif. This is a very fine quartet although it is true that it does not seem to have the same depth and weight as his Second. Still, it is an important work, typical in mood of the period from which it comes. That we do not hear it in concert is really too bad. Experienced amateurs will also be able to manage it.



Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) was born in Bergamo, Italy of humble origins. His father was an assistant at the village pawnshop. In 1806, at the age of 9, he was able to attend a charitable school and there met the then famous composer, Simone Mayr, who became his mentor and lifelong friend. Donizetti is well-known, of course, as a composer for the opera. However, many will be surprised to learn that he did write a fair amount of chamber music, including 18 string quartets, some string quintets, piano trios, and an octet for winds and strings along with several other instrumental works. **String Quartet Nos.1-4** were written between 1817-1818 and still studying private with Mayr. **String Quartet No.5-8** were written while he was studying at the Bolognese Conservatory. **String Quartet Nos.9-16** were written in 1821-22 after he had left the Conservatory but was still living in Bologna. Biographers refer to this time as his Quartet Years as he was writing these works for amateurs and friends. **String Quartet No.17** came in 1825 by which time he was living in Naples and well on his way to being a successful opera composer. His last string quartet **String Quartet No.18** was composed in 1836 when he was thirty nine years old and already quite famous. For the most part, these quartets are related to those of the Vienna Classics, Haydn, Mozart, Krommer, Wranitzky, Wolf and others (but not Beethoven) to which his teacher had introduced him. His style did not change much over time except that the latter quartets have more indication of the opera composer he was to become. They are charming works, well-written and fun to play. Amateurs will get pleasure from them. As for concert, only programmed as a curiosity by a famous opera composer.

Felix Draeseke (1835-1913) was born in the German city of Coburg. He began composing at an early age and subsequently entered the famous Leipzig Conservatory where he studied composition with Julius Rietz and piano with Ignaz Moscheles. However, his musical outlook was shaped and influenced by the so-called New German School of which Liszt and Wagner were the leading proponents. He held a number of teaching positions in



Switzerland and Germany, eventually settling in the city of Dresden and a few years later began teaching at the Dresden Conservatory. He wrote in nearly every genre and his works were frequently performed during his lifetime. Liszt was a champion of many of Draeseke's compositions and helped them gain publication. His music was played with some regularity during his lifetime and up until the end of the Second World War, but

none of it could be said to have achieved any lasting popularity. As Hans von Bülow, one of his staunchest supporters once wrote, “Draeseke's music is a hard nut to crack”.

And, indeed, his style does take some listening to get used to. **String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.27** was composed in 1880 and published in 1885. The opening movement, *Allegro risoluto*, is fresh and energetic but soon gives way to a more lyrical, cantabile second theme. Of particular note is a delicate question and answer dialogue between the cello and first violin. Next comes a slow movement, *Largo*, which is filled with lovely melodic themes. A restless and quicker middle section provides excellent contrast. A powerful, thrusting Menuetto, *allegro moderato* follows. The trio section, entitled *Intermezzo*, is noteworthy for the transparency of the writing, which is further enhanced by principally giving the cello the lead. The finale, *Presto con fuoco*, is particularly effective with its exceptionally fine contrast between the passionate, yearning main theme and the religious, chorale-like second subject. A good work for concert and for home.

String Quartet No.2 in e minor, Op.35 dates from 1886.

The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, opens with a very impressive singing theme in the cello. A clear, mellow second theme follows. The second movement, a *Scherzo*, is lively and genial while the trio, with its fine melody, is more serious. The slow movement, *Adagio molto espressivo*, impresses by virtue of its excellent use of tone color and its rich embellishments. The finale, *Allegro molto vivace*, sports a lively theme which is followed by an inspired lyrical melody. This also a very good quartet suitable for concert performance and for home music makers.

Draeseke's third and final quartet, **String Quartet No.3 in c# minor, Op.66** was composed 1899. The first movement, *Andantino elegiaco*, expresses sadness which is at times interrupted by stormy episodes. The bubbly, sparkling second movement, *Scherzo, allegro spumante*, lives up to its title, while the trio, with its easy tunefulness, provides a soothing contrast. A very expressive slow movement, *Adagio non tanto*, which is tinged with melancholy comes next. Before the finale, Draeseke inserts a graceful *Intermezzo*. The finale, *Allegro risoluto*, begins in a powerful, almost harsh fashion, while the second theme is a lovely cantabile melody. This quartet in particular requires a few hearings to better understand the music, but nonetheless is appealing. It too deserves to be heard and played.



Georg Druschetzky (1745-1819 Jiří Družecký in the Czech form) was born in the small Bohemian town of Jemniki, then in the Austrian Habsburg Empire. Though his primary instrument was the oboe, he also became a first rate timpanist. The latter offered him a career in the military and he served as a grenadier, rising to the rank of Regional Director of Percussion for the Austrian army. After leaving the army, he served as composer to several Hungarian and Austrian noblemen, and was eventually appointed court composer to the Archduke Joseph, then Regent of Hungary. Druschetzky spent the last decades of his life in Budapest. Though, as might be expected, he wrote a great deal of works for the oboe and other wind instruments and much military band music which included the timpani, he was a versatile and prolific composer, who wrote in virtually every genre. Among his

output were many chamber music works, including 12 string quartets and 4 string quintets and several other works for various combinations of winds and strings. Druschetzky was intimately familiar with the works of his contemporaries, in particular Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, and made dozens of arrangements of their various compositions. This certainly explains why his quartets, even the early ones from the 1770s have four movements rather than three. Clearly, he followed the Viennese model as established by Haydn rather than that of the Mannheim School espoused by the Stamitzes. Druschetzky wrote quartets throughout his life. I am familiar with **String Quartet No.3 in D Major**, an early work, intended for the home music making market, amateurs with modest technical accomplishments. In four short movements, Allegro, Adagio, Menuetto with trio and Presto, the Quartet is a perfect model of the Vienna Classical Style. This pleasant unassuming work can be recommended to amateur and student groups seeking a technically undemanding work from the early Vienna Classical Style.



Théodore Dubois (1837-1924) was born in the French town of Rosnay. After an impressive career at the Paris Conservatory, where he studied with Ambroise Thomas, he won the coveted Prix de Rome. Among the many important positions he held during a long career was that of director of the Madeleine, where he succeeded Saint-Saëns, and later of the Paris Conservatory. Among his many students were Paul Dukas and Florent

Schmitt. Dubois wrote a considerable amount of music in nearly every genre. Like Saint Saëns, with whom he was almost an exact contemporary, he eschewed impressionism, and continued on in the French Romantic tradition which the former had helped to pioneer. It is characterized by, logic, clarity, fine melody, drama and a refined sense of taste. His music is finely crafted and clearly shows that he was a gifted melodist. For much of his career, he concentrated on vocal works, opera and organ compositions and did not turn to chamber music until well into his sixties in the first part of the 20th century. By then Impressionism was in vogue and the critics as well as the public paid little attention to his traditional late French Romantic style which was by then considered outdated, despite its excellence.

The **String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major** dates from 1909 by which time he was 72. It is quite an interesting work, original with nothing like it. It begins with a lengthy Larghetto introduction which is by turns very romantic and then dramatic building tension toward the main section Allegro. The second movement, an excellent, high spirited Allegro animato, is a playful scherzo. In third place is a sad and valedictory Larghetto which provides a strong contrast to the previous movement. The finale, Allegro vivo, is a very energetic and full of drama and forward motion. This is a first rate work by any standard and marvelous example of late French romanticism. It is a great pity that it has remained unknown and virtually unobtainable outside of France, it has even been long out of print there. His String Quartet No.2 in F Major was composed in 1918 but not published until the year before his death. It disappeared shortly after publication



Lucien Durosoir (1878-1955) was born in Boulogne a suburb of Paris. He studied violin and composition in Paris and later in German with Joseph Joachim and Hugo Heermann. He became an orchestral player and soloist but this was interrupted by WWI. He served in the French army and after war lived quietly in the south of France composing. He wrote three string quartets. **String Quartet in f minor** dates from 1920. **String Quartet No.2 in d**

minor was composed in 1922. **String Quartet No.3 in b minor** was completed in 1934. The music cannot be categorized and is hard to describe. It certainly is not tonal in the traditional sense. It is polytonal and at times atonal. He intentionally isolated himself from the trends in Paris and elsewhere and as a result his style is highly personal. Are these quartets appealing? Well, that depends on your taste. I found them at times interesting, but for the most part unfocused and not particularly compelling. I cannot see them being successful in concert nor appealing to most amateurs.



Jan Dussek (Dusek in the Czech form 1760-1812) was one of the first great touring piano virtuosi during the last quarter of the 18th century. He concertized throughout Europe and served as Pianist and perhaps lover to the likes of Catherine the Great, whom he was later accused, probably speciously, of trying to assassinate. He also served as pianist for the King of Prussia, Prince Radziwill of Poland, Marie Antoinette and later Talleyrand. While in England, he collaborated with the famous piano maker John Broadwood and encouraged him to extend the piano's range and power. Broadwood's piano with Dussek's improvements was eventually sent to Beethoven and became his favorite instrument. Dussek is thought to have studied composition with C.P.E. Bach. In any event, he wrote a huge amount of music, most of it for piano in one form or another, including a considerable amount of chamber music with piano. His contemporaries often considered his music very modern and hard to understand because of his use of chromaticism and certain harmonies. Today, of course, they sound more or less typical of the Vienna Classical era. Virtually the only chamber music Dussek wrote which did not include the piano are his **Three Op.60 String Quartets** composed in 1806. Writing to his publisher Dussek comments, "*These quartets are not in the style of Haydn, Mozart or Pleyel--they are in the style of Dussek and that in and of itself should make some noise in the musical world!*" Such modesty! Composed after Haydn's last quartet (Op.103) and before Beethoven's Op.18, Dussek clearly hoped that these works would place him into the front rank of contemporary composers. That, of course, did not happen probably because though composed in 1806 they sound more like something from 1760.

Of the set, **Op.60 No.1** is the strongest. It has received a modern edition. Surprisingly, it is only in three movements despite the fact that four was more or less the norm by that time he wrote them. The opening Allegro grazioso is elegant, light hearted and well constructed. The Larghetto non troppo lento because of the way it is written sounds nothing much like a slow movement but rather a flowing serenade. The finale, Tempo di polacca, is a charming and buoyant Polonaise. Perhaps this quartet could be performed as a curiosity. It can be recommended to amateurs who want an early classical style work, but I can see no reason the last two of this set should be revived.



Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904) is, of course, one of the most famous composers of all time and needs no introduction. If you ask quarteters how many quartets Dvorak wrote, most won't know. Some of the more knowledgeable might guess 7, but few have any idea that he published 14, not including the Two Waltzes Op.54 and the 12 Cypresses B.152. (There is also a Quartetsatz from 1873, Andante Appassionato con sordini, and a fragment, B.120 from 1881) Of the 14, judging from publishers' lists, it's fair to say that seven of the quartets may qualify for the sobriquet of 'known' or at the very least obtainable. These are, Op.27 (Old Op.80), Op.34, Op.51, Op.61, Op.96, Op.105, and Op.106, the

last three being the so-called Master Quartets. But the fact remains, in concert, one rarely hears anything other than the last three: Op.96, the ubiquitous ‘American’, Op.105 and Op.106. Occasionally, one is treated to Op.34 or 51, but that’s all. In more than 45 years of concert-going in Vienna, London, Amsterdam, Munich and Chicago, I have never heard Op.27 or 61— perhaps if I lived in Prague, I might have. I have played all of them more than once. Although some readers may not be familiar with all of the aforementioned 7 quartets, I will not discuss them here because it is easy to hear them on disk or online and to obtain the music. I shall instead discuss the 9 other complete works for string quartet that Dvorak wrote, with which virtually no one is familiar. But before any discussion of the composer’s works can begin, one must deal with the problem of reliability presented by the opus numbers attached to Dvorak’s works. Many were intentionally misnumbered by Dvorak’s greedy (if not unscrupulous) publisher, Simrock and have subsequently become known to the public by these incorrect numbers. The huge success of Dvorak’s first set of Slavonic Dances made Simrock rich. He realized he was sitting on a gold mine and quickly sought to publish earlier works which Dvorak had been unable to sell. However, Simrock intentionally christened these works with much higher opus numbers than they should have had thus misleading the public into believing that the works were of a recent vintage. A prime example of this chicanery is Dvorak’s String Quartet No.8, B.57 originally published as Op.80. Only after Simrock’s death did the public learn that it was in fact, Op.27. It was only in 1960 after many years of painstaking study, that the preeminent Dvorak scholar, Professor Jarmil Burghauser, was able to compile a definitive listing of the composer’s works. Burghauser did for Dvorak what Ritter von Köchel and Otto Deutsch did for Mozart and Schubert, hence musicologists now append “B” numbers to his works. Until recently, it was virtually impossible to obtain parts to any but the 7 ‘known’ quartets, but now, thanks primarily to the Czech publisher, Supraphon, they are all in print.

Dvorak’s **String Quartet No.1 in A Major, Op.2, B.8** was written in 1862 when he was 21. This first quartet, is in my opinion, a marvelous work and a very mature sounding Op.2. The last page of the manuscript bears the inscription, “To God Thanks!” which most scholars have explained as a thanksgiving after much effort and hard work. Sadly, the quartet was not even performed until 1888 and not published until 1947, nearly half a century after Dvorak’s death. Critics have always found No.1 to bear a kinship to Schubert, Schumann and Brahms. Certainly in form this is so, but the thematic material is Dvorak’s and Czech sounding as well, although certainly not in the full-blooded way of his later quartets. The opening 13 measures of the Andante-Allegro bears a choral quality one often finds in Dvorak’s slow movements. The allegro section is full of dramatic impact. The following Andante affetuoso ed appassionato overflows with lyrical and rich melody and a intimate tenderness one finds again in the later quartets. An excellent Allegro scherzando is nearly on a par with any he wrote later and the lively finale, Allegro animato, rounds out what was acclaimed to be a very good work when the famous Bohemian Quartet made it part of their repertoire in the 1890s. It must be admitted, however, that it is far too long as are all of Dvorak’s first 7 quartets. Dvorak with more than 25 years experience behind him made numerous large cuts in 1888 tightening the work’s structure and heightening its dramatic impact in preparation for public performance. Unfortunately, Supraphon, publisher of the complete edition, has chosen to print all works in their full uncut version hence destroying the effect of Dvorak’s later efforts. Given the proper cuts, this quartet could succeed in the concert hall, and there are no extreme technical difficulties that might scare away experienced amateurs.

Listening to Dvorak’s next three quartets always makes me think he stepped off of Earth onto another planet. That planet was called Wagner! These works are so different from what came

before or after that almost no listener would guess that the same man had written them, let alone that that man was Antonin Dvorak. In actual fact, Dvorak personally met Wagner in 1863 when he played in the viola section of an orchestra under Wagner’s baton, the latter conducting preludes to Tannhäuser, Tristan and Die Meistersinger. Dvorak fell under Wagner’s spell. Quartet Nos. 2-4 were written by Dvorak sometime between 1869-1870. They were attempts by him to combine the discipline imposed by chamber music with the concepts of Liszt and the harmonic and thematic principles of Wagner.

I have waded through **String Quartet No.2, B.17** twice and each time found nothing but vague sounds of Wagner in this overly long work—the cello part is 23 pages. Some critics have found parts which reminded them of Schubert and Professor Burghauser points out that Dvorak quotes Mendelssohn’s Wedding March in the fourth movement, an 8 page Andante-Allegro giusto, as part of a musical joke. If so, my quartet could not find it and few were laughing. But why let me ruin it for you, you can play it for yourself.

Stranger and, sad to say, more appalling yet is **String Quartet No.3, B.18**. There can be few quartets longer than this, the first violin part runs 31 pages, the cello part 27. In fairness, the editors indicate possible cuts but it is impossible to smoothly implement them. One would be forced to cover up parts of several pages and cut and paste. More Wagnerian than the Second, one can plainly hear parts of Lohengrin in the Andantino. The work is characterized by themes which are repeated over and over and over and then when you can stand it no longer, they appear again in marginally mutated form in the next movement. If you’ve a lot of time on your hands, get the music and play it yourself.

Should this sound harsh, read on. By the time Dvorak got to **String Quartet No.4, B.19**, he was either running out of paper or energy, as evidenced by the fact that this work is only half as long as the Third, although it is still somewhat longer than his last quartets. The Quartet is a la Liszt in a single movement, Each part is 15 pages long. The thematic material is clearly a cousin to Wagner’s Tristan. The fact is, that Dvorak, unlike say Sinding, had no affinity for the music of Wagner and was not very good in expressing himself in such a way. As the parts to Nos.3 & 4, unlike No.2, were not in the Dvorak family’s possession, it was thought that these were among the works that Dvorak referred to as “burned.” It is known that he came to realize that this writing was not very good. While Nos.2 & 3 can be played by experienced amateurs, they will not make much headway on No.4

By the time we reach **String Quartet No.5 in F Major, Op.9, B.37**, Dvorak had, at last, surfaced from the drowning pool of Wagnerism. In the three years which separate this Quartet from Nos.2-4, Dvorak was fortunate enough to have had several of his works performed at the Prague Free Music Concert Series. The director of these concerts, Dr. Prochazka, the influential Prague music critic, made a point of championing Czech music, and the compositions of Smetana were widely featured. Most Dvorak scholars believe it was the example of Smetana that was responsible for Dvorak’s departure from Wagnerian writing and the beginning or return to composing in Slavic and especially Czech idioms. Certainly Quartet No.5 exhibits these traits. Though still a lengthy work, the composition is clearer. The opening themes of the Moderato-Allegro con brio, are clearly Czech. Perhaps best known as a piece for Violin and Orchestra, the gorgeous second movement, Andante con moto quasi Allegretto, was originally created for this Quartet. There are few things that Dvorak wrote which are more beautiful. This is followed up by a magnificent Tempo di Valse, which for once is just the right length. The concluding, Allegro molto, though good, is twice as long as need be. Performance cuts are indicated in the Breitkopf & Härtel (No.5454) edition. The work belongs on the stage and would be very successful so long as the indicated cuts are observed.

String Quartet No.6 in a minor, Op.12, B.40 also dates

from 1873 and was, according to Burghauser, with the exception of the last movement, composed before No.5. Apparently at the time it was begun, Dvorak was still enamored with the concept of a whole work in one movement and that is how the Quartet was originally composed. By the time he got to the last part, he had divided it into four classical movements and removed certain sections. He never actually completed his revision although, again according to Burghauser, his intent was clear and the work could be published without any guess work. Still, the work is too long, though a major advance over his earlier efforts. It is neither, in my opinion, as strong as No.5 nor as focused, and is not likely to be a success in the concert hall.

String Quartet No. 7 in a minor, Op.16, B.42 dates from the following year, 1874. It was the first quartet of his to be published (1876) and as such the first to become publicly known. Here at last, is the beginning of Dvorak's mature chamber music style. In four movements, this work is of the right length. There is little or anything to quibble with here and for all practical purposes, this, too, should be considered one of his 'Master Quartets.' In the opening Allegro ma non tanto, Dvorak shows considerable skill in the extensive development of the movement's two main themes. The beautiful Andante cantabile is a very polished and fetching piece. The Allegro scherzando is quite possibly the strongest of the four movements, tightly written with a contrasting trio is every bit as fine. The finale, Allegro ma non troppo, whose main theme is based on a recurrent triplet figure, is perhaps a trifle long and does have considerable 'sawing' in it, but having performed it several times, I can attest to the fact that audiences always find it effective. It should present little problem to amateurs and should be given a chance by professionals.

The **Two Waltzes, Op.54 B.105** (Moderato and Allegro viva) date from 1880. By then, he had written the Op.27, 34 & 51 quartets. Originally for piano, Dvorak took especial care in reworking them for quartet as they were a kind of gift offering to the Prague Chamber Music Association which had programmed his music in concerts. Though slight, they are in totally charming and mature works which would make excellent encores.

The last important work for string quartet is the **Cypresses B.152** which date from 1887. They consist of twelve short pieces which were a reworking of a song cycle by the same name composed in 1865. In these youthful songs, Dvorak had tried to express his feelings about love and as such the music is highly romantic. The pieces bear titles as You are my glorious rose, When your sweet glances on me fall and so on. But make no mistake, these are not overdone, but rather superb, intimate sketches marvelously expressing a tremendous range of emotions. Every quartet group should attempt at some point to have a go at these rather unique love songs for quartet. Available in several editions, perhaps the one edited by Josef Suk, Dvorak's son-in-law and prize student, is the best.



There is no composer whose works were more frequently passed off as Mozart's than **Anton Eberl** (1765-1807). Even more surprising was the documented fact that there was no protest from Mozart against the use of his name on Eberl's compositions. Eberl, a friend and student of the great man, did mind but was too timid to take action until after Mozart had died. Finally, he published the following notice in a

widely read German newspaper, "*However flattering it may be that even connoisseurs were capable of judging these works to be the products of Mozart, I can in no way allow the musical public to be left under this disillusion.*" Despite this, his works still continued to be published under Mozart's name. This in itself was a reliable indication as to the contemporary opinion of the quality of Eberl's works but we also have contemporary critical reviews of his works such as that of the influential Berlin Musical Journal

which wrote these words in 1805 after a performance of his new Symphony, "*Since the symphonies of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, nothing but this symphony has been written which could be placed along side theirs.*" Eberl was born in Vienna and studied piano and composition from several teachers, including Mozart. Besides being an outstanding composer, he was a pianist of the first rank and toured throughout Europe. He wrote well over 200 works and in nearly every genre. The opus numbers given to his works bear no relation to reality. He wrote three string quartets, his Op.13 which date from 1801. Of these, the first two I thought unremarkable and not of the sort that would have been mistaken for Mozart who by then had been dead for a decade. In fact they sound as if they were written before the famous ten.

However, **String Quartet No.3 in g minor, Op.13 No.3** does bear some similarities to the great man. The first movement opens with an Adagio introduction which leads to the engaging main section Allegro agitato. Next comes a typical Viennese Minuetto, allegretto with a finely contrasting trio. The third movement is an appealing Andante molto, which is a little on the fussy side. The finale is a exciting, hard driving Allegro. All in all, I think the quartet sounds more like something Haydn would have written than Mozart. Still, perhaps this work could be brought to concert for historical reasons, especially given Eberl's relationship with Mozart. It can be recommended to amateurs.



Joachim Eggert (1779-1813) was born in the Swedish town of Gingst on the isle of Rugen. He studied the violin, organ and composition from a series of relatively obscure musicians. He eventually procured a position as a violinist in the Royal Swedish Court Orchestra, later becoming its music director. He served as its conductor and received several commissions for works. He composed at least 14

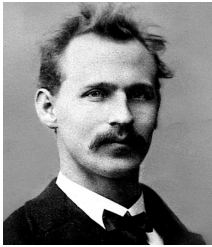
string quartets. His Opp.1-3, dating from the early 1800s all contained three quartets in addition to which there were five more without opus. Some have received modern editions. They are generally in four movements, and quite well-written and sound like something Haydn might have written had he been composing around 1810, but they are not as advanced as Beethoven's Op.18. I have played through several of them and found them rather enjoyable. They are interesting enough to be presented in concert and certainly will like if they enjoy Haydn.



Edward Elgar (1857-1934) was widely regarded as Britain's quintessential Victorian and Edwardian composer. His orchestral works made his name and reputation and have remained in the repertoire. In his sixties, he finally got around to composing some chamber music.

His **String Quartet in e minor, Op.83** was the second of three chamber works he composed in 1918. In many ways, it can

be regarded as a successor to the quartets of Brahms whom he greatly admired. While the music is quite expressive, the mood is generally rather restrained. The first movement, Allegro moderato, has a restless quality with its opening bars sounding like something from the Renaissance before a dark, somewhat pastoral Elgarian melody enters. The second movement, Poco andante, has warm themes redolent of the English countryside. The finale, Allegro molto, is robust and has an uncompromising quality. Lyricism is not particularly evident. This is a work which is not everyone's cup of tea, as the English might say and the work has not gained a foothold in the repertoire outside of England. Not a work for beginners, it is not beyond experienced amateur players.



Catharinus Elling (1858-1942) was born in Oslo. He studied violin and piano locally before attending the Leipzig Conservatory for two years. Subsequently he won a scholarship to study with Heinrich von Herzogenberg in Berlin. He pursued a multi-faceted career of teacher, at the Oslo Conservatory, composer, folk song collector, author and music critic. He wrote two string quartets. I

only know them through recordings. To the best of my knowledge, they are not in print.

String Quartet No.1 in D Major, dating from 1897 while Elling was still in Germany. The opening Allegro vivace begins with a rather long unison passage. Full of bustle and forward motion, it would have made a good finale. It is Nordic sounding, mostly by using of its Halling rhythm, a popular Norwegian folk dance. The second movement, Andante, is based on a sad folk melody, quite effectively done. Next comes an Allegretto quasi allegro. It is the use of pizzicato, which gives the first section a kind of genial intermezzo quality. The syncopated middle section is faster and thrusting. The finale, begins with a substantial Poco lento introduction. Though attractive, it neither builds tension nor gives any indication of the Vivace which follows. There is much thrashing about with some snippets of Norse folk melody but overall I found this movement, though workman-like, the least convincing. On balance a good work, worth a look-see but I would not bring it into the concert hall.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor was composed in 1903. The Allegro moderato with which it begins is altogether in feel from the music of the first quartet. It has a more modern feel. The themes wander about and there is a lack of cohesiveness to it. In second place has a certain dramatic appeal but again the thematic material does not seem to hang together and there is an overall creation of sound without discernable subjects, as a result it was somewhat boring. The finale, Molto vivace, is much like what has come before. There are no themes which could qualify as memorable. I would forget about this work.



Joseph Elsner (1769-1854) was born in the Silesian town of Grottkau, then part of Prussia, now in Poland. It is not known with whom he studied violin and composition, but he became proficient at both and served as second concertmaster in Lemberg (Lwow, Lvov, Lviv) and then in Warsaw where he worked as a theater director and co-founder of what eventually became the Warsaw Conservatory. He pursued a career as a teacher and a composer. His influence on Polish music cannot be over estimated.

Among his many student were Ignacy Dobrzynski, Stanislaw Moniusko and Frederic Chopin. He wrote at least six string quartets that were published. The first set of three are his Op.1 composed in the early 1790s.

Op.1 No.1 in F Major begins with a stately Allegro. Next comes a delicate Andante. In third place is a lively Polonaise in place of a minuet. Not overly Polish sounding. The finale is a Haydnesque Allegro. One notices immediate that that the lower voices, especially the cello, are given more chances to shine than one finds in many of Haydn's quartets. Good enough for the concert hall and recommended to amateurs.

Op.1 No.2 in a minor only has three movements. It begins with an Allegro. The middle section is in the major. The Larghetto to which comes next is a set of variations. The finale, an Allegro, is the strongest and a good movement, however, overall it is not enough to raise this work to the level of No.1

In **Op.1 No.3 in D Major** the cello takes the lead in introducing the main theme to the workmanlike Allegro. A bouncing Minuetto is placed second. Lively but a bit trite. The trio is an

Austrian Ländler. Third is an Andante poco adagio also a kind of set of variations. The work concludes with a fetching Polish-sounding Rondo. Better than No.2 but not quite as good as No.1

A second set of three quartets, Op.8, were completed in 1796 and published by the German firm of Jean Andre of Offenbach. This was during his time in Lemberg, then part of the Austrian-Habsburg Empire. where he often played quartets in the homes and salons of the upper classes.

Op.8 No.1 in C Major has only two movements. The opening Allegro moderato is bright and elegant, written in concertante form with each voice receiving an opportunity with the melody. It shows the influence of the Parisian Quatuors Concertants. The dramatic mood swings which are created by sudden changes in dynamics and modulations were probably a product of Elsner having been a conductor of operas. The second movement is a theme and set of variations with each instrument getting a chance to shine in different variations. A rather fetching variation in the minor appears in the middle of the set. Not a candidate for the concert hall but can be recommended to amateurs

Op.8 No.2 in E flat Major begins with a very substantial Adagio introduction which in and of itself was rather unusual. It leads to a dancing Allegro in which all of the voices get solos. The middle movement, Andantino, surprises with its passionate outbursts after its stately opening bars. The quartet ends with a lively Rondo allegretto which both by virtue of its jaunty melody and rhythm make clear that Elsner had the Krakoviak, a traditional Polish folk dance, in mind. Good for concert and home

Op.8 No.3 in d minor opens in a somewhat gloomy and agitated fashion. The repetition of the opening rhythmic figure creates tension and a certain unrest but also of monotony. It is followed by a sunny, cheerful section. So different is it, that it hardly seems related to what has come before. The middle movement, an Andantino, begins as a quiet but beautiful song without words. But towards the end there are unexpected dramatic outbursts The finale, Rondo, allegretto, begins in a jerky start-stop fashion, which is then interrupted by a brief virtuosic violin passage which in turn is followed by a heavy, almost lugubrious stylized Polacca that has an ominous mood. I would not bring this work to the concert hall or recommend it to amateurs



Maurice Emmanuel (1862-1938) was born in the French city of Dijon. He studied at the Paris Conservatory with Leo Delibes and Cesar Franck. He pursued a dual career as a composer and musicologist and in 1909 obtained the position of Professor of Music History at the Conservatory. Though not a prolific composer, he composed in most genres. Among his many students were Robert Casadesus,, Georges Migot, Jacques Chailley, Olivier Messiaen and Henri Dutilleux.

Emmanuel's **String Quartet in B flat Major** was completed in 1903 but not published until 1912, It is a noteworthy work. The first movement, Adagio, Andante, Moderato (etc.) reminds one somewhat of Beethoven's late quartets in its continual alternation of quick and slow tempi, and in the violent contrast of ideas which are diametrically opposed to one another. The second movement, after a few bars of Andante, contains a charming Allegro vivace in 6/8. The finale, Alla zingarese, is full of life. With chords from the viola and cello to mark the rhythm, the theme is developed on the violins before passing to all of the instruments. Fierce 16th note passages continually sweep through it, and give to the whole movement a character of wild fury. Good for concert and for experienced amateurs of with solid technical ability.

Georges Enescu (1881-1955) is one of the better known composers of the 20th century. Born in the Romanian Liveni, he was a child prodigy both on violin and composition. At age seven, he



was admitted to the Vienna Conservatory where he studied with Joseph Hellmesberger Jr and composition with Robert Fuchs. He continued his studies at the Paris Conservatory and lived most of his life in that city. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major, Op.22 No.1 was finished in 1920 and dedicated to the famous Flonzaley String Quartet, but it was not published until 1957. It is a massive work, last-

ing the better part of an hour. It is quite complex and does not lend itself to description other than to say it is entirely tonal and in a post impressionist style. Though it is suitable for concert performance, its length and complexity would put it beyond the patience of most modern audiences, and perhaps for this reason it has never entered the repertoire. This is not a work for amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.22 No.2 despite an opus number which suggests it was begun immediately after No.1, was in fact not begun until 1950 and completed two years later. It is not traditionally tonal but neither is it atonal. Very tough to discern themes and not as appealing, if that is the right work as his first quartet. This work has never entered the repertoire either and I do not think the great majority of audiences would find it an experience they would ever want to repeat.



Johann Carl Eschmann (1826-1882) and his music are virtually unknown today. But this was not so during his lifetime. He was a friend of both Wagner and Brahms. Several of his songs and piano works were published but quickly disappeared after his death. His main claim to fame was as the author of the book *Wegweiser durch die Klavierliteratur* (Guide to the Piano Literature) which went through more than

a dozen editions over a 50 year period. Eschmann was born in the Swiss city of Winterthur. After studying piano locally there and in Zurich, in 1845, he enrolled at the newly founded Leipzig Conservatory where he studied composition with Felix Mendelssohn and Niels Gade and piano with Ignaz Moscheles. After Mendelssohn's death in 1847, he returned to Switzerland working as private teacher and choral conductor. The bulk of his music has never been published and languished in the private libraries of his relatives until the last decade of the 20th century when his family donated several works to the Zurich Central Library.

A set of handwritten parts, but no score, to his **String Quartet in d minor** is among these. Published by Edition Silvertrust in 2017. The work was probably completed 1847 or 1848 shortly after he left Leipzig. It is in four movements and begins with a quasi recitativ introduction which recalls Mendelssohn's Op.13 quartet. The main part of the movement, Allegro con fuoco, is full of drive and is quite dramatic. The lovely, second movement is a leisurely Andante, quite lyrical. Next comes an exciting Scherzo, allegro vivace. Fleet and nervous, the guiding hand of his famous teacher is unmistakable. The lyrical opening melody of the finale, Allegro assai, is particularly fetching. Later, come several powerful dramatic climaxes. It is hard to understand why Eschmann never got around to publishing this fine work. Good for concert and for home.



Botho Sigwart zu Eulenberg (1884-1915) was the son of a Prussian prince and part of the high aristocracy. His father was a friend of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Sigward, as he was known to distinguish himself from his father whose name was also Botho, had a musical gift which showed itself early. Though he studied history and philosophy at the university in Munich, at the same time,

he studied composition with Ludwig Thuille at the Munich Conservatory. He was killed in the First World War. He lived a multi-faceted life, but music was his main interest. He had some 20 works with opus number to his credit.

His **String Quartet in B Major, Op.13** dates from 1909. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, opens in dramatic fashion with a gripping theme over a pulsing accompaniment. It is written in post Brahmsian, late Romantic style. A very accomplished and exciting movement. The second movement, Largo, is a lyrical cross between a folk melody and a song without words. In third place is an oriental sounding Allegro non troppo. It swirls about wildly in the upper voices over an ostinato in the bass. There are echoes of Reger here and there but overall it is more melodic than Max. The finale, Andante con variazione, begins with a lyrical somewhat restrained theme. This type of movement is rarely successful as a finale. Come critics even find Beethoven's effort in The Harp Quartet Op.74 not entirely satisfying. Eulenberg's are interesting and well done, but probably should have been one of the inner movements rather than the finale. Still, this is a first rate work, a candidate for the concert hall. It requires good amateur players.



Victor Ewald (1860-1935) was born in the then Russian capital of St. Petersburg and lived most of his life there. At the surprisingly young age of 12, he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he studied cello with the famous virtuoso Karl Davidov and composition with Nikolai Rimsky Korsakov and Nikolai Sokolov. He pursued a dual career as a professor of civil engineering and as a musician.

He served for 20 years as the cellist of the famous Belaiev String Quartet and his **String Quartet in C Major, Op.1** was awarded a prize in the 1893 Chamber Music Composition sponsored by the Russian Musical Society whose judges were Tchaikovsky and Rimsky Korsakov. In addition to this quartet, he wrote a string quintet and 5 quintets for brass instruments. Today, if he is remembered at all, it is for these brass quintets which are often performed and have been recorded several times. The Quartet is full of charm. It is fun to play and presents no technical problems beyond the scope of the average amateur player. The quartet was composed during 1891-1892. The opening movement, Allegro commodo, features appealing melodies at a comfortable tempo. Nothing hurried everything cleverly executed. The second movement despite its tempo marking, Allegro, is a really a more relaxed kind of scherzo with fine contrasting trio in the minor. A slow movement, Andantino, starts off with a folkloric melody which by turns becomes romantic and then dreamy. The finale, Allegro, begins with a bright melody in the first violin over the pulsing double stops of the viola. A second subject is a rustic peasant dance then followed by a dark melody in the viola with a striking rhythmic accompaniment. Well conceived from start to finish. Good for concert or home.



Joseph Eybler (1765-1846) was born in the Austrian village of Schwechat, a suburb of Vienna. He studied with Albrechtsberger who declared him the greatest musical genius in Vienna after Mozart. It appears that his reputation and his position as Hof Kapellmeister were due to his composition for the Church. These represent the great bulk of his output. Both Haydn and Mozart had high praise for him and it can be said that

his String Trio and String Quintets are quite good. Sadly, the same cannot be said of his string quartets of which he composed at least nine. His Op.1 quartets of which there are three are rather

pedestrian and his Op.10, another set of three border on the banal. Suitable for beginning students, but otherwise best left alone.



Blair Fairchild (1877-1923) was born into a Boston Brahmin family. He had a dual career as diplomat and composer. He studied composition with John Knowles Paine at Harvard University and then later in Paris with Charles-Marie Widor. His musical style was based on music he had heard during his diplomatic travels and shows the influence not only of Widor but also of Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky.

His **String Quartet in g minor, Op.27** dates from 1911. I have attempted to sight read this work twice with players of professional caliber and say it was an unedifying experience. It is nearly impossible to keep together from an ensemble standpoint and one has to wonder whether Fairchild bothered show the music to any quartet prior to composing. It is unnecessarily difficult and the quality of thematic material is not of a quality to justify the difficulties. This is a work best left alone.



Alexander Faminzin (1841-1896) was born in the Russian town of Kaluga. He studied composition with Moritz Hauptmann and Ernst Richter and piano with Ignaz Moscheles at the Leipzig Conservatory. He pursued a career as a Professor of Music History at St Petersburg Conservatory and as a composer. Russian sources state he wrote three string quartets. I am only familiar with the first two.

His **String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major, Op.1** dates from 1869. It opens with a short Adagio introduction which leads to an appealing Allegro molto. The second movement is a rather ordinary Adagio, but the third movement, Allegro non troppo, stands out. It sports a rather well done fugue based on a Russian folk melody. The finale, Presto, with its striking use of rhythm and choral thematic material is also impressive. It is not hard to play and can be warmly recommended to amateurs, though perhaps not for the concert hall.

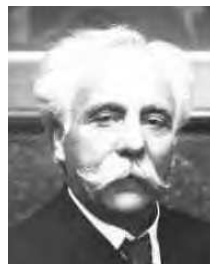
String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.7 came out in 1877 and bears the subtitle Serenade, which gives some indication of the composer's intention. But this is not particularly a Russian serenade as there is little in the work to indicate it was by a Russian composer. The opening movement, Allegro con moto, is a very romantic and charming idyll. The Allegretto which follows is a kind of intermezzo which makes strong impression not only because of the thematic material but also the use of rhythm. The third movement, Notturmo, andante, is the kind of night song that could put the listener or player to sleep. The finale, begins with an Andantino theme and is followed by a set of variations—Canine, Valso, Andante—probably the best variation and Scherzino. As I have written before, it seems to be difficult to write a really impressive theme and variations as a finale and this movement is illustrative of this fact. Still amateurs will enjoy it.



Guido Fano (1875-1961) was born in the Italian city of Padua. He was trained as a pianist and composer. His main teacher was Giuseppe Martucci. He composed only one string quartet,

String Quartet in a minor, dating from 1942 at which time he was 67. Following the lead of his teacher Martucci, he discarded the traditional Italian tendency toward operatic melodrama and wrote more in the instrumental style of Central European composers

and the tonality is of post romanticism. That said, it must be remembered of the huge changes that had occurred in music during the course of his life. He was Jewish in 1938 was forced to leave his position as a professor of music and to go into hiding. His quartet was written during this time. The opening, Allegro moderato, has the quality of leisurely traveling music, of a journey, neither sad nor joyous. The Presto non troppo which comes next is in neo classical style, edgy and nervous. This is followed by an Andante con intimo profondo whose title promises much but is rather a let down, wandering about in no particular direction. A fourth movement Elevazione is not as the title suggests elevating, but a rather sluggish fugue reminiscent of Late Beethoven. The finale, Allegro vivace, the most modern sounding of the five movements, is lively, original and attractive and holds the attention quite well. Overall, a worthwhile effort which could be presented in concert. It is not particularly difficult and can be recommended to experienced amateurs.



Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) was born in the village of Pamiers, Ariège, Midi-Pyrénées. At an early age he was sent to study at the famous École Niedermeyer, a Parisian school which prepared church organists and choir directors. He studied with several prominent French musicians, including Charles Lefèvre and Camille Saint-Saëns. For most of his life, Fauré worked as a church organist and teacher. Among his students

were Maurice Ravel and Nadia Boulanger. He was a founder of the Société Nationale de Musique and eventually became director of the Paris Conservatory. In retrospect, he has come to be regarded as a transitional and unique figure in French music. His lifetime and works spanned the period of the mid Romantic right up to the modern post-WWI developments of Stravinsky. He and his music were well-known during his lifetime and several of his works are still popular today such as his Requiem, the opera Pénélope, the music for Pelléas et Mélisande and the Dolly Suite. He wrote a considerable amount of chamber music; including two piano quartets, two piano quintets, two cello sonatas, two violin sonatas, a string quartet, and a piano trio.

His **String Quartet in e minor, Op.121** is his last completed work composed in 1924. Already in failing health, Fauré most have known the end was not far off. As such, it is not surprising that the overall mood is ethereal and other-worldly or as one critic put it, a meditation on last things. In three movements, the work opens with an Allegro moderato, with the viola chosen to present the main theme which gives it a quiet and contemplative if not eerie quality. The movement is dominated by a dialog between the first violin and cello. The second movement, Andante, is a kind of choral lament. The finale serves as both a scherzo and final movement. It opens as a traditional last movement, Allegro, but the middle part begun by the cello serves as a scherzo. In forty years of concert going in both American and European cities, I have only heard the quartet performed once. Perhaps because of its lack of dramatic impact. It is a sad, valedictory departure. Technically it is not difficult, but there is the ever present problem of trying to understand the composer's intentions.



John Fernstrom (1897-1961) was born in China to Swedish parents who were missionaries. He was educated in Sweden studying the violin and composition at the Malmö Conservatory. He pursued a career as an orchestral violinist, conductor and composer. He composed eight string quartets. I am only familiar with Nos. 3,4,6 7 and 8 which I only know from recordings, not having had the chance to play them. The first four are tonal,

more or less, in the traditional sense. They are edgy, clever and often quite melodic. From five on, they are polytonal. I would say that concert audiences would find these works engaging and interesting. They would require experienced players.



Friedrich Ernst Fesca (1789-1826) was born in the German town of Magdeburg. He studied piano and violin with several different teachers, including for a short time Ludwig Spohr. By age 16 had already obtained a position as a violinist in the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Not long after, he was employed as solo violinist to the Court of Jerome Bonaparte, at that time, King of Westphalia. After this he lived for a while

in Vienna where he befriended the famous violinist, Ignaz Schuppanzigh, first violinist of the famous Beethoven Razumovsky String Quartet. His final years were spent working in Karlsruhe along with fellow composer Franz Danzi. He composed in nearly every genre from opera to solo piano works, however, the bulk of his output was chamber music. Carl Maria von Weber, writing of Fesca's chamber music, had this to say. "*Mr. Fesca is completely master of whatever he undertakes to express. I am fully convinced of his remarkable talent. His works are carefully written, thoroughly elaborated and richly flavored.*" Spohr, upon hearing a performance of one of the Op.1 string quartets called it a fine work full of talent. Fesca's tuneful works were popular through out most of the first half of the 19th century, but like so many other good pieces disappeared for no real discernable reason. Fesca wrote some 18 string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in E flat, Op.1 No.1 is the first of a set of three which appeared in 1806. These were not, however, his first quartets. There were two without opus which predate the Op.1. The opening Allegro has for its main subject a tuneful and swinging melody. The second theme and other ideas are all closely related to it. Next comes a deeply felt Adagio which has an almost religious quality to it. This is followed by a lilting Menuetto with a very interesting contrasting trio in which pizzicato is used to telling effect. The finale, though marked Allegretto is for all intents and purposes a whirling allegro. A good choice for concert in place of a Haydn and for amateurs as well. A new edition was made by Edition Silvertrust.

String Quartet No.2 in f sharp minor, Op.1 No.2 opens with a deliberate and articulated Allegro, which gradually turns into a tuneful and swinging melody. The second movement, Andante con moto, has for its main theme a beautiful choral, religious theme of exquisite delicacy. An original-sounding syncopated Scherzando, with its catchy syncopated part in the bass line is captivating. The finale, Allegro non troppo, consists of a theme and several very fine variations, each providing an excellent contrast with the one which precedes it. This too is a good work though perhaps not quite as strong as No.1.

String Quartet No.3 in B flat Major, Op.1 No.3 begins with a genial, tuneful but unremarkable Allegro. This is followed by a sweet Andantino. In third place is a Poco presto which starts off rather lamely but interest quickly arrives. The finale, Rondo, is pleasant but not particularly exciting. Certainly good enough for home but not concert performance. I am not familiar with his Op.2, also a set of three quartets, presumably composed not long after the Op.1. String Quartets, although one source lists them as dating from 1815..

String Quartet No.4 in b minor, Op.2 No.1 was the first of a set of three that was published in 1816 but were composed around 1810. The opening Allegro moderato, begins with a somewhat melancholy theme but tension and tempo quickly build to create a sense of forward movement. which gradually turns into a tuneful and swinging melody. The second movement, Poco adagio, is sad and reflective. The bright and upbeat Menuetto

allegro, has shades of Haydn and stormy interludes reminiscent of early Beethoven. A diffident trio section with pizzicato provides a nice contrast. The finale, Allegro, is a toe-tapping, dancing rondo.

String Quartet No.5 in g minor, Op.2 No.2 was the second of a set of three that was published in 1816 but were composed around 1810. The opening Allegro, begins with a sad, yearning theme but tension and tempo quickly build to create a sense of forward movement. The second movement, Andante, is subtitled Siciliano begins in a sad fashion but soon there is a contrasting interlude in the major which is brighter and more upbeat. The third movement is marked Un poco allegretto, menuetto, keeps the same mood as the preceding movements but the trio section has some unexpected dynamic surprises. The finale, though not so marked is a set of variations, or perhaps more accurately mood swings from Andante con moto with a slower middle section, grave, and a concluding Allegro.

String Quartet No.6 in E Major, Op.2 No.3 was the last of the set. The opening Allegro, begins with a short duo between the first violin and cello. The rest of the movement resembles a serenade. The lovely second movement, Andante, though slower, retains the mood of the first movement. Next is a Presto, scherzando, an exciting romp with operatic overtones. The finale, Un poco allegretto, is cheerful and songlike.

String Quartet No.7 in a minor, Op.3 No.1 is the first of a set of three from 1817. The opening Allegro begins in dramatic fashion with a plaintive cry and is followed by turbulent stormy episodes. The second movement, an Andante, features much intricate filigree writing, expertly executed. The third movement, Menuetto, allegro, is certainly closer to a scherzo than a classical minuet, and could hardly be said to be something which could be danced to. The finale, Allegro molto, bears much in common with the opening movement, it is full of drama and pathos. This work is suitable both for concert performance and home.

String Quartet No.8 in D Major, Op.3 No.2 The opening movement, Allegro moderato, begins with a tuneful dialog between the first violin and the cello, then suddenly powerful sound bursts interrupt the proceedings of this interesting movement. Next comes a fleet footed Scherzo, presto. In third place is a peaceful, singing Andante con moto which provides a nice respite from the frantic Scherzo. The bustling finale, Presto brings the work to a successful close.

String Quartet No.9 in E flat Major, Op.3 No.3 begins with an Allegro which really does not have the quality of an allegro but more of a stately minuet. Appealing but out of place for an opening movement. Next comes an Adagio which approaches a lyrical Mendelssohnian Song Without Words, keeping in mind that Mendelssohn was only 8 at the time. The third movement, Scherzo presto, is a Haydnesque affair. The finale, Allegro molto, begins as a fugue. Nicely executed, reminiscent of Haydn but thematic material is weaker. But still good for amateurs. I am not familiar with Op.4, a single quartet dedicated to Ignaz Schuppanzigh, nor with his Op.7 two string quartets all of which were published, if not composed around the same time as Op.3.

Whereas Fesca's string quartets in major keys tend to be genial, sunny works filled with pleasant music but very little drama, this is not the case of his quartets written in minor keys. Certainly his **String Quartet No.10 in c minor, Op.4** is dramatic and quite exciting. It was completed in 1815 and dedicated to Ignaz Schuppanzigh, leader of Count Razumovsky's famous string quartet which introduced the works of Beethoven. In 1815, Vienna was filled with kings, princes, dukes, counts and diplomats from around the world as the famous Congress of Vienna which ended the Napoleonic wars was in full swing. In the evenings, music was played in the many palaces and concert halls of that city. No doubt, Fesca took this into account in composing this quartet and dedicating it to Schuppanzigh in hopes that he would perform it in front of such audiences. And he did to great success and this in

part helped to make his name. The opening movement begins with a brooding and somewhat ominous, substantial Poco adagio, a very Beethovenian introduction. The main section, Allegro, is stormy and dramatic. The second movement, Adagio, has a valedictory quality to it. This is followed by an explosive Menuetto, allegro molto. Why Fesca called it a menuetto is mystery for it is far from a minuet but clearly a powerful, hard driving scherzo. However, the gorgeous ländler-like trio section does resemble a Viennese waltz. The finale, Allegro, has a wayward subject for its main theme, which projects a constant sense of movement.

String Quartet No.11 in f minor, Op.7 No.1 while not particularly dark and brooding, though exciting cannot, be said to be sunny. It was the first of a set of two completed in 1817 and dedicated to Baron Karl von Freydorf. The opening movement Allegro, has a sense of yearning and is characterized by its forward motion. The second movement, Larghetto con moto, is calm and peaceful. This is followed by a hard-driving and energetic Menuetto, allegro. Certainly, it is not a minuet which could be danced to. Scherzo would have been a far more appropriate movement title. A lovely German ländler-like trio section provides a fine contrast. The nervous finale, Allegro, begins with a start-stop stutter step before it gets going. But once it does there is a continual sense of movement to the attractive themes.

String Quartet No.12 in e minor, Op.7 No.2 The opening movement Allegro, has a resolute introduction before presenting the main theme which combines lyricism with a sense of yearning. The second movement, Adagio, is doleful, almost funereal in nature with its sense of mourning. Next comes a whirling Vivace, scherzando, full of excitement. The cello presents the opening theme of the finale, Allegro con spirito, a lolling, Beethovenesque melody. It is a stormy and dramatic affair.

String Quartet No.13 in d minor, Op.12 was composed around 1818. The Allegro moderato which opens the work is of a high quality with its dark, tuneful melodies. There is a Beethovenian feel to it. It is followed by a very fine deeply felt Larghetto. Next comes a Menuetto, dark and thrusting with a fine lilt to it. The finale, an Allegretto, has much the same mood as the preceding movements but with some surprisingly sunny interludes. One might have wished for a little more excitement, but this is a first rate quartet deserving concert performance.

String Quartet No.14 in B flat Major, Op.14 was composed in 1819. The Allegro has an relaxed wayward quality with a sense of underlying restlessness. The Adagio non troppo features a long-lined, lovely melody played against a filigree accompaniment. Next comes a bright and lively Scherzando. The finale, Un poco Allegretto, has much the same mood as the first movement.

String Quartet No.15 in D Major, Op.34 came out around 1824 and begins with a bright, unassuming Haydnesque Allegro. The lyrical Andante which comes next which approaches a folk lullaby. This is followed by a busy Scherzo vivace. The upbeat finale, Allegro, begins with interesting use of dynamics and double stops in the cello. Several playful interludes follow. Not a bad work, worthwhile for amateurs, but I do not think it deserves concert performance.

String Quartet No.16 in C Major, Op.36 was composed in 1825, the year before his death. It begins with a genial and pleasing Allegro which rather sounds like the music of his teacher Louis Spohr. Although the Andante which comes next first is subtitled Siciliano, it sounds more like a slow German country dance, rhythmically deliberate than traditionally Sicilian music and later it even has Scottish tinges to it. This is followed by a dark and somewhat lugubrious Menuetto, molto moderato, which is slow enough to be danced to. However, there are several interruptions with changes of tempo. The finale is a bright, toe-tapping Vivace which makes you want to jump and dance.

If reputation could be likened to a horse race, then in the "19th Century Czech Composer's Derby" Antonin Dvorak would cross



the finish line several lengths ahead of his nearest rival, Bedrich Smetana, and then, after an even greater distance, would come **Zdenek Fibich**, far behind in third place. But reputation must not be confused with quality. Fibich (1850-1900) is no third rate composer. That his music fell into obscurity can be explained by the fact that Fibich lived during rise of Czech nationalism within the Habsburg empire. And while Smetana and

Dvorak gave themselves over entirely to the national cause consciously writing Czech music with which the emerging nation strongly identified, Fibich's position was more ambivalent. That this was so was due to the background of his parents and to his education. Fibich's father was a Czech, his mother, however, was an ethnic German Viennese. Home schooled by his mother until the age of 9, he was first sent to a German speaking gymnasium in Vienna before attending a Czech speaking gymnasium in Prague. After this he was sent to the Leipzig Conservatory where studied piano with Ignaz Moscheles and composition with Salomon Jadassohn and after graduating, he spent after the better part of a year in Paris. Fibich, in contrast to either Dvorak or Smetana, was the product of two cultures, German and Czech. He was perfectly fluent in German as well as Czech. This was important in shaping his outlook and approach to composition. Fibich understood that German was one of the leading languages of Europe and he knew that writing opera and vocal works (his main areas of interest) in Czech would limit their appeal. What he did not appreciate was that writing such works in German would profoundly affect the way in which he and his music were regarded by Czechs. In his instrumental works, Fibich generally wrote in the vein of the German romantics, first falling under the influence of Weber, Mendelssohn and Schumann and later Wagner. Fibich did not wish to write music that merely sounded nationalistic. And therein lies the reason that Fibich has never been held in the same regard by his countrymen as either Dvorak and Smetana or even Janacek. But is it not fair to state that his music never sounds Czech. It just does not often sound obviously so. Fibich makes use of Bohemian folk melodies and dance rhythms such as the Dumka. He was also the first to use the polka in a chamber work in his quartet in A Major.

His **String Quartet No.1 in A Major** dates from 1874 but was not published during his lifetime. Despite this fact there is no evidence that Fibich was embarrassed by his effort or that he never wanted it to see the light of day. There are reports that copies of the manuscript did circulate in Prague, but as far as I know, it was never given a public performance until after his death. The main theme to the first movement, Allegro grazioso, opens in a questioning manner, however, it is immediately restated in the major and remains bright, upbeat and graceful. The lovely second theme is more lyrical but also graceful. Lacking drama or excitement, geniality is the word which best sums up the mood of this movement. The second movement is a slow and very romantic Andante semplice. There is much here which is highly original and unusual. For example, the lyrical main theme is introduced in its entirety by the second violin. Then, on several occasions, Fibich, in mid-phrase, abruptly interrupts what is an idyllic mood with a brusque and questioning unisonic passage which sounds very similar to the technique Sibelius employed decades later. Perhaps more notable yet, and surprisingly few if any critics seem to have picked up on it, is the fact that the lyrical second theme is clearly of Czech origin and of the sort Dvorak would later use. It is the third movement, Allegretto, which surely would have drawn the musical public's attention had it been performed. While not so marked, Fibich used for what was the first time a Slavic dance form, specifically a polka, in a string quartet. Unfortunately, by failing to publish this quartet, no one could know that it was he, and not Dvorak and Smetana, who had been

the trailblazer. The finale, *Allegro*, in my opinion, is the most original and unusual of all. The opening theme is a frenzied and tonally advanced fugue begun by the viola. Eventually becoming tonally tamer and a bit reminiscent of Mendelssohn. Then, suddenly and without warning, a powerful *Maestoso* is thrust forward. Played loudly and twice as slow as the fugue, it is in the form of a late 17th century chorale. The first part arguably sounds Bohemian, though it might be German. The second part, at least to me, sounds 19th century Czech. But this is not all, for those who wish to carefully listen, there are several clearly Czech touches to this music. The most obvious comes when the fugue returns after the *maestoso* and is then followed by what is clearly a lyrical Czech melody. The exciting coda combines the fugue with the *maestoso* to create a very effective closing. This is quite a good work which deserves to be better known. While amateurs will no doubt enjoy playing this quartet, professional groups will find that it is quite suitable for the concert hall.

Fibich's **String Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.8** was composed in 1878 and is the only one of his three works for string quartet that was published during his lifetime. In four movements, the opening movement is a genial *Allegro moderato*. His clear gift for melody is very apparent not only here but throughout the quartet. The main theme of the magnificent second movement, *Adagio*, is solemn and prayer like, sung by all the voices in a choral fashion. The second violin and viola are often the carriers of the song whilst the first violin circles softly above them. The cello is used only as a pedal bass. The main theme to the *Allegro scherzando* which follows is a whirling dance characterized more by energy than by melody. The slower trio section is based on a folksong and provides good contrast. In the finale, *Allegro vivace*, the main theme, as well as the second subject, sound of Czech folk music. After a whirling, *pesante* introduction, the buoyant and syncopated main theme is presented. The second subject is more lyrical second theme. In the coda, the whirling, *pesante* introduction reappears to close the movement. In sum, this is a fine quartet, comparable say to Dvorak's Op.51.

The third and final work that Fibich wrote for string quartet was his **Theme & Variations in B Flat Major**. While there are many examples of a movement within a string quartet which is a theme and set of variations, there are very few stand-alone works which are in this format. Fibich's were composed in 1883, but like his First String Quartet, were not published until after his death, in this case 1910. The theme, as is normally the case, sounds like it is based on a folk tune, but it is not at all lyrical in nature. Nine relatively short variations and a coda follow. Although it is a good work, it is too long to be an encore at 11 or 12 minutes, and not really strong enough to be presented on its own.



During the mid 1970's, I chanced upon two Melody LPs with the three string quartets of **Arkady Filippenko** (1912-1983). Here was a composer of whom I had never heard, and yet when I listened to the three string quartets, I could not believe it—these works were every bit as good as the best quartets of Shostakovich. I wondered how it was that I had never heard of Filippenko. It was only years later with the advent of the internet I learned that he

had lived in Kiev and had taught at the conservatory there. Eventually, I found a Ukrainian website run by an American living in Kiev. I visited the site and put up a notice to the effect that I was looking for the quartets. Weeks passed with no response. Then one day I heard from a fellow living in Lviv (formerly Lvov, formerly Lublin). He worked as a tour guide for Americans and British visiting Ukraine and was willing to check the Kiev Conservatory when he next visited that city a few weeks off. Meantime, he checked the Lviv Conservatory and to my surprise found hand written scores to the quartets. As a result, I eventually ob-

tained copies of the manuscripts. After the music arrived, my son Skyler spent the summer of 2006 working on creating parts and scores. He finished String Quartet No.2 and String Quartet No.3 before returning to Lawrence University, a small liberal arts college in Wisconsin, with a first class conservatory attached to it. His violin professor, Paganini Competition Laureate Stephane Tran Ngoc, was the leader of the Lawrence University String Quartet, which had concertized throughout the United States, Europe and Asia. Skyler showed the parts and scores to Tran Ngoc who was very interested. This ultimately led to the Lawrence String Quartet giving the U.S. premiere performance of String Quartet No.2 in Madison, Wisconsin as well as several subsequent concert performances, including a performance on National Public Radio.

Filippenko was born in in Pushcha-Vodycia, then a picturesque village, but now a suburb of Kiev. His early childhood was often spent with his grandfather, a cattle herder, who handcrafted musical pipes which he played to bring the cows home. These pipes were the first instrument which Arkady learned to play. As a schoolboy, he took part in an orchestra of folk instruments, playing the guitar, mandolin, and balalaika. In 1926, he entered a vocational school and studied river transport. Upon graduation he was sent to a shipbuilding factory, while at the same time, he participated in amateur musical shows and was a founder of the Kiev Theatre of Working Youth, which later became a professional company. It was while doing this that he drew the attention of the composer Ilya Vilenski who invited Arkady to study with him. Hence, Filippenko was in his mid teens before he had his first formal music lesson. With Vilenski, he learned to play piano and also studied music theory, while at the same time working in a factory as a metal turner. In 1931, still at the factory, he began attending evening classes at the Lysenko Musical Institute. (later it became the Kiev Conservatory) His teachers were Lev Revutsky, Victor Kosenko and Boris Liatoshinsky.

Filippenko's **String Quartet No.1 in a minor** was completed in 1939. In three movements, the main theme to the opening *Allegro moderato*, begins after a short, questioning introduction. It is full of élan and characterized by great forward motion. It leads directly to a second and more lyrical theme, which in turn is followed directly by an exciting third subject. Only then does development begin. The second movement, *Moderato e cantabile*, begins with the viola singing a sad, haunting melody over the muted tremolo of the violins. Each voice slowly makes its entrance before the lovely second theme, inspired no doubt by Borodin, begins. Slowly, tension is raised and builds to a suspenseful climax. The massive finale, *Allegro agitato*, opens with a heavily accented and hectic main theme that conveys a sense of urgency while the lovely second theme is given out by the cello over the rhythmic accompaniment of the lower voices. This in turn leads to heroic and colossal coda. An outstanding choice for concert but well within the ability of experienced amateurs.

In his **String Quartet No.2 in D Major**, he set out to describe the heroic struggle of the Soviet People during World War II. The Quartet won the U.S.S.R. Prize for 1948. It is in four substantial movements. Despite its dedication to the Soviet people, it is not program music although because of its highly evocative nature, one can well imagine what it might mean. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins quietly in canonic fashion, with each instrument entering one at a time. The mood stays subdued and the tempo moderate until suddenly a dramatic burst of energy brings forth a restatement of the main theme. The muted second movement, *Andante*, has for its main theme a dreamy but sad plaint. The exotic second theme is played against a drum beat *pizzicato*. The third movement, *Allegro molto*, is an indescribable, wild bacchanal of folk melody. Really unmatched in the literature. In the finale, *Adagio*, the exotic theme of the second movement, accompanied by the *pizzicato* drumbeat, returns. This time, the mood is somber though not funereal. Slowly the march dis-

appears and the music becomes softer and more lyrical. Then tension is slowly built to a series tremendous climaxes before the music softly dies away. But the closing measures are not of death and despair but rather an apotheosis of hope, for unlike the victims of tyranny and fascism who died, the Soviet People lived on to survive the terrible cataclysm that was World War II. A superb work in every respect, deserving to stand along Shostakovich's No.8 and to take its place in the standard repertoire. This is the only string quartet to have won the U.S.S.R. State Prize. It is truly a mystery why this quartet and the rest of Filippenko's music has not taken its rightful place along side of that of Shostakovich and Prokofiev. The only possible explanation is the internal politics of the former Soviet Union which rarely championed non-ethnic Russians. Ukrainian artists in particular were adversely affected by this bias.

String Quartet No.3 in G Major dates from the 1950's. It is in three large movements and opens with a brief, tonally wayward Adagio introduction which leads to the main part of the movement, Allegro, Molto leggiero, con fuoco. This is certainly one of the most extraordinary movements in the literature. It begins pizzicato, with all of the voices strumming a simple but lovely Ukrainian folk melody. From here, tension is gradually built and along with momentum. It is truly a virtuoso display of compositional talent. The second movement, Andante, begins with muted strings and has the aura of mystery to it. The viola and second violin take turns developing the theme over a deep threatening note in the cello. In the last half of the movement, stormy interludes break forth and the main theme from the first movement makes a brief reprise before the music softly fades away, Andante pensieroso, on a chord which makes no resolution. Suddenly, a highly energetic but nervous Risoluto con fuoco bursts forth with great force. The tremendous tension and forward motion eventually lead to the glorious second theme, a proud melody introduced by the first violin. With hardly time for a breath, the music pushes forward faster and faster, almost out of control, it slows briefly before rushing head-long to the powerful ending. Another outstanding work.

String Quartet No.4 in a minor dates from the 1971. It is in three movements. The two outer movements are quite substantial, the lyrical and calm middle movement is shorter. While the Third Quartet was essentially positive and optimistic, No.4 is overall of a darker hue. And while there are many tempo and mood changes, the work is by and large melancholy and restless. It opens with a Largo rubato introduction in which the viola alone presents the main subject in a lengthy solo before the others join in. The tempo goes from sostenuto to moderato to allegretto to energico to drammatico and then agitato as tension and momentum are gradually built. The middle movement, an Adagio, is muted. It can be said from a mood standpoint to be shaped in an arc. It begins quietly, with a calm lyricism but as it proceeds to the middle the temperature rises first to risoluto, then allegretto and finally allegro before it subsides and closes adagio. The finale, Allegretto, begins in unusual fashion with three upper voices strumming away pizzicato like some giant guitar while the cello introduces a Ukrainian folk tune which slowly speeds up and becomes a wild and exciting dance. This is another master quartet. He wrote a fifth quartet, the music to which I have been unable to obtain and there is no recording.



Jerzy Fitelberg (1903-1951) was born in Warsaw, the son of well-known composer and conductor Grzegorz Fitelberg. He studied in Moscow and Berlin, where he worked until the Nazis rise to power, after which he fled to Paris and subsequently to New York where he lived the remainder of his life. He composed six string quartets. I am only familiar with the first two..

String Quartet No.1 dates from 1926 and was clearly influenced by Stravinsky, as witnessed by some direct quotes from the latter's *L'histoire du soldat*. It is a nicely put together and energetic neo-baroque, neo-classical work. And like the form of the classical serenade, the first and last movements are nearly identical. It places no obstacles before the listener, without descending into triviality.

String Quartet No.2 was completed in 1928. After winning a prize from the Association des Jeunes Musiciens Polonaise, he arranged it for string orchestra. It is an appealing, post impressionist work with a touch of Bartók. The jury which award the quartet the prize consisted of Maurice Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Albert Roussel and Arthur Honegger was no doubt taken by its jazzy sections a la Stravinsky, full of energy and with bright, singable melodies combined with minimalist episodes. By contrast, the middle movement is unsentimental and rather austere.



Wilhelm Fitzenhagen (1848-1890) was born in the German town of Seesen, where his father was serving as music director. After studying with his father, he continued his studies with Theodor Müller and Friedrich Grützmacher, at the time the most famous cello teacher in Germany. Fitzenhagen served as a professor of cello at the Moscow Conservatory and was one of

Russia's most important cello teachers and enjoyed an important solo career, taking part in the premiere of Tchaikovsky's the *Rococo Variations* as well as his string quartets and piano trio.

His **String Quartet in d minor, Op.23** dates from the mid 1870's. The work opens with a pensive Adagio introduction. Suddenly, the cello interrupts affairs with a plunging, chromatic passage which leads to an agitated Allegro moderato. The lovely second movement, Andante, is played muted. The main subject could well be a legend. The beautiful thematic material is highly romantic. Next comes an Allegro which serves as a scherzo. After a short march-like introduction, the main section begins. In mood, it is closer to an intermezzo than a scherzo with its pizzicato and cross-rhythms. The finale, begins with a slow, somewhat sad, Russian-sounding Larghetto introduction. However, this is dispelled by the bright main section, Allegro energico, which, full of good spirits, follows. This is a really fine mid-romantic era quartet which not only sounds good in performance but is not particularly difficult to play. The part-writing, as one might expect from an experienced string player, is first rate throughout.



Richard Flury (1897-1963) was born in the Swiss town of Biberist. Among his many teachers were Felix Weingartner and Joseph Marx. Flury spent most of his life as a conductor of several Swiss orchestras. A fairly prolific composer in most genres, during his lifetime his work was hailed by such luminaries as Richard Strauss, Franz Lehar, Pablo Casals, Joseph Szigeti, Walter Geiseking and Weingartner.

Chamber music occupies a fairly important position among Flury's music. In all, he wrote 7 quartets.

String Quartet No.5 in C Major is the only one with which I am familiar and that is by listening to a recording. It was composed in 1955. The opening Allegro molto is very original, tonally both adventurous but familiar. A subdued and mostly introspective Andante is followed by a short and very modern, tonally adventurous Bewegtes Walzertempo, an effective movement. The finale, Allegro molto, is sunnier than the preceding movement, but full of tonal surprises. Accessible to amateurs, and recommended to pros looking for an attractive modern work.

Josef Bohuslav Foerster (1859-1951) was born in Prague and first studied with his father who was a leading organist and Pro-



fessor at the Prague Conservatory. Foerster studied organ at the Prague Organ School and composition at the Conservatory. Upon graduation he took over from Dvorak as chief organist in one of Prague's leading churches. He was on friendly terms with all of the leading Czech composers and was initially influenced by Smetana and Dvorak. He worked as a music critic in Hamburg after marrying the leading Czech soprano who was engaged at the Hamburg opera.

In Hamburg, he met and became close friends with Mahler as well as Tchaikovsky. When Mahler left for Vienna, Foerster followed him and became a professor at the New Vienna Conservatory. After the formation of the Czech Republic in 1918, he returned to Prague where he taught for many years at the Conservatory. His music while initially influenced by Smetana and Dvorak, later changed as did musical styles, although he always remained a tonal composer. After his first period, his works no longer could be considered nationalistic as he stopped employing the idioms of Czech folk music and adopted a more personal and mystical style. He composed in most genres including five string quartets and three piano trios.

Dating from 1893, **String Quartet No.1 in E Major, Op.15** was dedicated to the memory of Tchaikovsky. In structure, it follows classical guidelines. It is not difficult to play and employs real Bohemian folk melodies for its themes, in the same fashion as Dvorak. The opening movement, Allegro, has a fresh sounding and beautiful main theme which is lightly tinged with Slavic melody. The marvelous Scherzo, Allegro con brio, features a very catchy main theme followed by a charming and piquant slower section. The compelling main theme of the Adagio which follows has the atmosphere of the opera about it, especially in the turbulent middle section. The energetic finale, Allegro con brio, both in melody and rhythm bring to mind Czech folk music. This lovely quartet ought to be heard in concert stage and amateurs will discover another fine late romantic Czech quartet.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.39 dates from 1894. In his first quartet, one finds the influence of the Czech nationalist school—led by Dvorak and Smetana—to be of fundamental importance to the writing. While one still hears some of this in his Second, he is already branching off in new directions. At the time of its premiere, critics praised it as a highly original work full of fresh ideas. The opening movement begins with a slow, mysterious Andante introduction, but the main section, Allegro, is bright and affirming. The main theme of the poetic second movement, Andante, takes the melody from a Foerster's friend Friedrich Hebbel's song *Vorüber* which describes a dream. The unusual finale, Andantino, is a theme and set of 16 variations, some quite short, others more detailed. Suitable for concert or home.

Although it is the length of a standard string quartet, **String Quartet No.3 in C Major, Op.61** is in one movement, albeit in four very contrasting sections. This was a technique pioneered by Franz Liszt and adopted by many composers during the first part of the 20th century. The Quartet was composed in 1907 and revised in 1913. By now, Foerster, though he had retained his fondness for Czech folk melody, had broken away from traditional structures and often sought out somewhat adventurous tonalities. Much like Smetana's *Aus Mein Leben* String Quartets, there is a biographical nature to the music. In the manuscript, Foerster quotes a poem *"Let the music bloom in your heart / And it shall reveal what cannot be said by words / My love, gratitude for countless sacrifices / And how sweet it was living with you..."* There are several subsections to each of the four sections. The first section is a kind of gentle lullaby, which is then followed by a polka that definitely recalls Smetana's First Quartet. Then comes the dramatic climax of the work which appears in the final two sections. An early 20th century masterwork, but technically undemanding and hence also suitable for amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in F Major, Op.182 dates from 1944. It was composed some 30 years after No.3 at which time Foerster was 85 years old. For that reason alone, it is an amazing work which shows the vigor of a man decades younger. The opening movement, Allegro grazioso, begins with a short viola solo. The themes which follow are lush and tonally rich with an occasional doff of the cap to modern tonalities. In the middle movement, Andante cantabile--allegretto malinconico, is quite lyrical until the middle section which presents a nice contrast with its Czech folk melody and dance rhythm. The finale, Allegro, is bright and upbeat. This is a fine example of modern Czech music which is also accessible to amateurs.

At age 91 in 1951, Foerster penned his final work in this genre, **String Quartet No.5 in G Major, WoO**. I can think of other composer who wrote a string quartet after age 90, much less lived that long. It is dedicated to his wife and subtitled *Vestec*, the place where he lived the final part of his life. It is in three movements, but Foerster made it clear that it was unfinished intentionally because he wanted it to mirror the way lives end. Yet it is an upbeat work, totally tonal and harking back to perhaps the first decade of the 20th century, sort of a modern Dvorak work. The opening movement, Allegro, opens with a series of questions and answers but the bulk of the movement is genial conveying a sense of travel. The gorgeous middle movement, Allegro vivo, is Czech through and through, lively and upbeat, unimaginable that it was the product of a 91 year old. The third movement, Adagio—*andante sostenuto*, is very romantic and tinged slightly with sadness. A superb work, great for concert and not hard to play.



Arthur Foote (1853-1937) was born in Salem, Massachusetts and was the first important American composer trained entirely in America. His main teacher was John Knowles Paine, from whom Foote gained an admiration for and was primarily influenced by the leading Central European Romantic composers of the day, such as Mendelssohn, Schumann, Dvorak and Brahms. After graduating, Foote became active in the musical life of Boston and made his living primarily by teaching the piano. He was fortunate in having friends and supporters who were able to arrange for his larger compositions to be performed by the Boston Symphony. Foote wrote approximately 200 works, most of these for voice. Though chamber music comprises only a small part of his output, these works are among his best.

String Quartet No. 1 in g minor, Op.4 dates from and was premiered in 1883. Though it was an early work and Foote's first chamber music work, one can clearly discern that this is the work of a mature composer with a sure hand. The captivating and somewhat nervous Allegro appassionato immediately shows him as a master of this genre. Perhaps the aura of Schumann hovers in the background. The lively Scherzo, Allegro con spirito, combines a rustic American melody with Central European compositional technique. The third movement, marked *Andante con moto*, is graceful and lovely. The finale, *Molto allegro*, is essentially an energetic rondo. This is a first rate work which almost certainly would have seen the light of day, and, at the very least, an occasional performance in the concert hall if Foote had been a German or Austrian composer. A good choice for concert and for amateurs also.

The String Quartet No. 2 in E major, Opus 32 was completed in 1893. The famous Kneisel Quartet of Boston premiered it the following year. After hearing the performance, Foote withdrew it from publication but retained the manuscript. In 1901 Foote allowed the third movement, *Tema con variazioni*, from the Second Quartet to be published as his Opus 32. It was published originally for string quartet but soon he authorized a transcription of the work for string orchestra and it is in this guise

that it has received a very rare performance. The theme is followed by six substantial variations. Again, Schumann's ghost seems to haunt this music. The variations begin in A minor and all but the fifth variation, which is in A major, retain that key. Each of the variations is clearly an independent idea and any relationship between them is difficult to notice. Further, each one comes to a complete close and in no way leads and blends into the next. The final variation, *Allegro assai*, is in a large, two part song form which begins with a vivacious contrapuntal opening.

String Quartet No. 3 in D major, Opus 70 was begun in 1907, completed in 1910. In this work, Foote shows that he had remained au courant with the latest trends coming out of Europe. His melodic language has moved far away from Schumann or Mendelssohn and even beyond that of Brahms and Dvorak. This can be heard at once in the tonality of the main theme to the opening *Allegro*. It shows the influence of the French impressionists as well as the post-romantics. A heroic first theme is followed by quixotic changes of mood and tempo, daring harmonies, contrasting textures, and teetering-on-the-brink-of-expressionistic gestures. In the excellent Scherzo, capriccioso, which serves as the second movement, we have classical structure with updated tonality. Of interest is the introduction of the cyclical idea pioneered by Franck and Wagner. In the trio section, the opening theme of the preceding movement makes a second appearance, however, dressed up rather differently. In some ways, the following *Andante espressivo* is a tribute to Brahms but here Foote goes beyond that master. One can, at times, hear elements of Janacek and even Schoenberg, while he was still a tonal composer. The, *Andante espressivo*—*Allegro non troppo marcato*, features a powerful but melancholy introduction leading to the restless and faster main section. This is without doubt an early 20th century masterpiece, as good as anything being written at the time. Can be managed by amateurs with little difficulty.



Emanuel Aloys Förster (1748-1823) was born in Niedersteine in the province of Silesia which at the time was part of the Austrian empire. Little is known of Förster's musical training other than the fact that he was proficient on the organ, piano, violin, bass and oboe and that he began composing at an early age. From the several hundred works he composed, it appears that in his early pieces, he was

influenced by C.P.E. Bach. His later works show the influence of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Sometime around 1779, he arrived in Vienna where he remained for the rest of his life working as a teacher of piano and composition. He was also a frequent performer in various Viennese ensembles and was on friendly terms most of the active composers in Vienna during this period, including Mozart, Haydn and especially Beethoven, with whom he enjoyed a close relationship. From the various concert program posters which survive from that era, we know that his string quartets, of which he wrote nearly 50, were often performed on programs with those of his more famous friends. Of these, it appears that only three sets of six were ever published, the rest remaining in manuscript form in various libraries, mostly in Vienna. Until recently, no modern edition of these works was available. However, since 2016, these quartets have received new editions from various publishers.

The first set which were published in 1793 and were dedicated to the cello-playing King of Prussia, Frederick William II is his **Op.7** which contain six quartets. Haydn, Mozart, Pleyel and Paul Wranitzky among others all composed works which were commissioned by Frederick William II. Haydn's were his Op.50. The solos the cello is given are not particularly adventurous or difficult. Pleyel seems to have forgotten the king played the cello and there are next to no solos given to the cello. Mozart made the best

use of the cello which is given the lead but integrated into the whole. Förster's quartets are in four movements and the writing tends to resemble Haydn's mid period, the use of the cello resembles that of Wranitzky, whose quartets are in concertante style, with the cello being given substantial solos in its treble register, hence requiring a technically secure cellist. Several Beethoven scholars have written that this set of quartets clearly influenced Beethoven's 18 quartets. In what way, is difficult to say as they are in now way similar.

Förster's second published set, his **Op.16**, came out in 1798. They are clearly in advance of anything Pleyel wrote and sound closer to Haydn's later quartets, excepting the Op.76 for which they could not be mistaken. Although not written for the cello playing king, the cello and to a lesser extent the viola are generously treated, albeit, not with virtuoso solo passages. These are good works, they can stand alongside of Haydn's, other than his Op.76, but cannot be compared to the last quartets of Mozart or early ones of Beethoven.

The final set of published quartets, like the others a set of six, was the **Op.21** which came out in 1803. These same scholars who have found that Förster's Op.7 influenced Beethoven's Op.18 have also concluded that the Op.18 influenced Förster's Op.21. Thirty seconds of either playing or listening to any of the Op.21 will make it clear just how laughable this idea is. These quartets, like his others bear little or no resemblance to anything Beethoven wrote. On the other hand, the influence of Haydn is rather strong. So then, what is the verdict. Almost any of these quartets can be recommended to amateurs. They are tuneful with several original and fresh sounding effects and with generally good part writing. As noted, the Op.7 require a technically adept cellist. A few of these quartets, such as **Op.21 No.2 in d minor** are strong enough and deserve to be heard in concert. Haydn's Op.17 and 33 are still often heard in concert, and yet Förster's are head and shoulders above such works. Fame is fickle.



Jean Francaix (1912-1997) was born in the French city of Le Mans where his father was director of the conservatory. Francaix studied there and at the Paris Conservatory with Nadia Boulanger. His early works were influenced by Ravel.

His **String Quartet in G Major** dates from 1938 and already shows that he had put Impressionism and the likes of Ravel and Debussy behind him. This is a neoclassical work, very appealing in four short movements—a light hearted and playful *Allegro vivace*, a slightly sad *Andante*, a *Scherzo presto* in which pizzicato features rather prominently with several spiccato bowed episodes which are by no means easy to play, and an upbeat *Allegretto moderato*, also a bit playful. An altogether pleasing work by an important 20th century composer, which belongs on the concert stage but not a work for any but the most advanced amateurs.



César Franck, even today, is remembered not only as the father of modern French music, but also for his *Symphony in d minor*. His chamber music, unfortunately, has in modern times been unjustly shoved to the side and forgotten. Franck (1822-1890) was, during his lifetime also known as one of the best organists in the world. He was also a piano virtuoso and in later life as a professor at the Paris Conservatory became an important teacher. Among his many students were Vincent d'Indy and Ernest Chausson.

His **String Quartet in D Major** was composed in the last year of his life (1890). The time was, certainly up until the

1950's, that this work was in the standard repertoire and could be heard outside of France and Belgium with some regularity. Not now. There are certain similarities to be found with Beethoven's Late Quartets with regard to the use of thematic material. The Quartet begins with a long Poco lento introduction in which the four bar main theme is set forth in solemn, mysterious fashion and eventually leads to an Allegro in which we not only encounter the main theme but a charming second theme both of which are juxtaposed throughout the movement. A quite original, ghostly sounding Scherzo, which is played muted, comes next. In some respects the music recalls both Berlioz and Schumann. A broad, noble melody serves as the main theme of the third movement, Larghetto, which again, in some ways recalls Schumann, in particular his third quartet. In the big Finale, the composer immediately recalls the themes of the previous movements, much as Beethoven did in his 9th Symphony. One mark against this work, besides its length, is the fact that in each movement, there is almost no place for the players to rest. Undoubtedly a work which does well in concert, it is not beyond amateurs.



Eduard Franck (1817-1893) was born in Breslau, the capital of the Prussian province of Silesia. He was the fourth child of a wealthy and cultivated banker who exposed his children to the best and brightest that Germany had to offer. Frequenters to the Franck home included such luminaries as Heine, Humboldt, Heller, Mendelssohn, and Wagner. His family's financial position allowed Franck to study with Mendelssohn

as a private student in Dusseldorf and later in Leipzig. As a talented pianist, he embarked upon a dual career as a concert artist and teacher for more than four decades during the course of which he held many positions. Although he was highly regarded as both a teacher and performer, he never achieved the public recognition of his better known contemporaries such as Mendelssohn, Schumann or Liszt. He had three quartets to his credit.

The String Quartet No.1 in f minor, Op.49, composed in the late 1840s, is clearly influenced by Beethoven's Op.95, without being actually imitative. The opening Allegro is broadly designed with an emotional, rhythmically incisive main theme. The second subject is calmer and the short closing section is ingenious. The second movement, Adagio, is inspired by deep and genuine emotion. The Minuet which follows is pleasant while the trio section has a flowing, refreshing melody. The main theme of the finale, Allegro appassionato, is as the marking suggests, passionate. However, the other themes are graceful and more relaxed. The coda is quite effective. A good work which can be recommended to amateurs and perhaps occasional concert performance.

String Quartet No.2 in E Flat, Op.54, composed in the early 1850s begins with a substantial Adagio molto introduction with many jarring tonalities of the type found in late Beethoven. It is searching music. It leads to a triumphant Allegro. Again there is much here that has the feel of mid-late Beethoven, which must have served as the inspiration. There is even an episode of furious arpeggios in the first violin that is almost a quote of that found in Beethoven's Harp Quartet. Yet for all this, the music does not sound derivative. This movement is written on a grand scale and hung upon a massive and extraordinary architecture. This is an impressive achievement. A big Adagio molto espressivo is placed second. The mood is deeply sad, the main theme funereal. As if to leave no doubt of his intent, Franck quotes the melody from Bach's aria *Es ist vollbracht* (It is done) from the St. John Passion. This is profound music, superbly written and highly effective. The light and jaunty scherzo, Allegro, seems somewhat out of place after such profundity, but there is nothing wrong with the music other than the fact that it provides such a jarring contrast to what has come before. The finale, a short Allegro, is a theme and

set of 11 variations. One wonders if the Harp served as inspiration for such an ending. Very few composers, who have used variations as a finale, have successfully managed it. The format does not seem to lend itself to finales. Many feel Beethoven failed in the Harp and I cannot say that Franck's effort is an unqualified success. While his variations are very good and provide excellent contrast with each other, the theme itself is somewhat trite. Perhaps the problem is that the first two movements are as good as anything from this period, but the last two movements, though more than adequate, still suffer by comparison by being merely good. Still, there is no doubt that this quartet would be successful in concert. It can also be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet 3 in c minor, Op.55, despite its opus number, was probably composed around 1870. Franck takes the explosive, dramatic writing of mid-late Beethoven as his model. The striking and powerful opening measures of the first movement, Allegro, immediately grasp the listener. An ominous and heavy pounding beat in the cello provides the background for a theme of destiny. The second subject, first stated by the cello high in its tenor register, is gentler and more lyrical. The calm, second movement, although marked Allegretto, is really an unhurried Andante pastorale. The sweet main theme has a naïve simplicity about it. An Allegro vivace, with its Halloween-like main theme, serves as a ghostly scherzo and provides a tremendous contrast not only with the preceding movement, but also with the innocent ländler of the trio section. The lively finale, an Allegro, begins quite softly with whirling triplets which quickly build and give way to the richly scored main theme. The first edition of this work was only published in 1899 some five years after Franck died, and quickly disappeared. This, in no small part, is certainly the reason that this fresh and original-sounding quartet never received the attention it should have. It not only deserves to be heard in concert but also will surely interest amateurs.



James Friskin (1886-1967) was born in Glasgow, and at a young age showed considerable music ability which gained him a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London, where he studied piano with Edward Dannreuther and composition with Charles Stanford. In 1914 Friskin went to the States to work as a teacher eventually joining the staff of the Juilliard School in New York where he remained for many years.

Friskin's **Phantasie for String Quartet** dates from 1906 and was composed for the prestigious Cobbett Competition. The Cobbett Competitions were designed to encourage the younger generation of British composers to write chamber music. Its founder and benefactor was the chamber music aficionado William Wilson Cobbett. The rules of the competition provided an alternate format, the old English Fancy for Fantasia from the time of Purcell, to the traditional four movement work which had developed from Haydn onwards. There was to be only a single movement of around 15 minutes duration embracing a variety of moods, tone colors and tempi while at the same time retaining an inner unity. (There was a rumor that because Cobbett was said to play string quartets during his lunch hour and required works of short duration, he came up with this idea) The work is has three main sections and a conclusion. The opening Presto is dominated by high spirits and humor. It shows the development of lighter, contemporary British music. Next comes a lyrical Poco adagio section with a contrasting, scherzo-like middle part. The third section, is flowing and expressive as is the finale which recalls earlier melodies. Not particularly profound, pleasant enough, a concert performance perhaps to show what was being produced for the Cobbett Competitions, but a good choice for amateurs.



Robert Fuchs (1847-1927) was born near the Styrian capital of Graz and attended the University of Vienna Conservatory studying with Otto Dessoff and Joseph Hellmesberger. By 1875, he himself was teaching at the Conservatory, eventually rising to the rank of Professor of Composition. He was one of the most famous and revered teachers of his time. Mahler, Sibelius, Hugo Wolf, Franz Schmidt, Alexander Zemlinsky, Franz Schrecker and Richard Heuberger were among his many students. Famous for his string serenades, he wrote a considerable amount of chamber music including four quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in E Major, Op.58 dates from 1897 at which time he was already 50 years old and had many works under his belt. The first movement, *Allegro passionato*, begins in a genial and attractive cantilena melody. The second movement, *Allegretto scherzando*, is gentle and not particularly scherzo like. The peaceful trio section is though soulful only reinforces the soporific mood. The slow movement, *Andante grazioso*, is harmonically interesting. The finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, is the most memorable of the quartet with interesting modulations and a fetching dance-like main theme full of energy. A solid work good enough for concert performance and recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op. 62 came two years later in 1897. The opening *Allegro moderato ma energico*, as the title suggests is energetic and shows more power than Fuchs usually wrote into his music and makes the strongest impression. The second movement, *Andante sostenuto*, is a song without words. A Menuetto comes next. It begins in a rather old fashioned way but eventually enters the romantic era. The trio section is a finely contrasting Mendelssohnian elves dances. The graceful finale, *Allegretto grazioso*, has a markedly charming, even elegant quality. Elegant and genial but like the first quartet lacking a certain something that makes it a candidate for the concert hall despite being very well written. Can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in C Major, Op.71 was composed in 1900. The opening *Allegro molto moderato e grazioso*, begins in a rather gentle vein, ingratiating and rather lovely but lacking any real power. The scherzo, *Allegro vivace*, is really very original and quite well done, alternating between playfulness and haunting. Fuchs sandwiches an ethereal trio in between. The slow movement, *Adagio molto e con sentimento*, begins is genial for the most part except when the cello takes the lead, bringing tension and a dramatic climax. The finale, *Allegro con brio*, begins with an upbeat *moto perpetuo*, suddenly a brief Hungarian episode interrupts and then quickly disappears. An interesting movement. Like the others, solid, well written, could be performed in concert and can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in A Major, Op.105 though composed in 1916, was only published in 1925 shortly before his death. It apparently never received a public performance and it was not until 2000 that it was recorded. Hence, having never really seen the light of day, so to speak, it has remained unknown from the beginning. It combines late romantic post-Brahmsian musical language with newer trends that contemporary tonal composers were then exploring. The opening *Allegro molto moderato*, quasi *allegretto*, is genial and playful. Fuchs uses syncopation tellingly to create surprise at the thematic development. The second movement, *Allegro vivace*, is one perhaps the best scherzos to be found in his quartets. The melody continually flits between the major and minor while rhythm once again plays a very important role in framing the music. The marvelously contrasting trio section consists of a lovely singing melody presented by the cello. The *Andante sostenuto* which follows begins in manner of a simple Austrian country folk melody but after several pastoral refrains the middle section unleashes a dramatic torrent in the minor. The finale, *Andantino*, *Allegro*, begins with a slow, diffident introduction which eventually gives way to the joyous, bustling

main section written on a huge scale. Fuchs shows by exploring the outer limits of traditional tonality, that though he was nearly 70, he was up to date. The quartet ends in grand fashion with a satisfying coda. The best of his four quartets which deserves concert performance and is in no way beyond amateur players.



Niels Gade (1817-1890) was born in Copenhagen and began his career as a concert violinist, later taking a position with the Royal Danish Orchestra. Mendelssohn, who was much impressed by and premiered Gade's First Symphony, invited him to teach at the famous Leipzig Conservatory. After Mendelssohn's death in 1847, Gade was appointed director of the Conservatory and also conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus

orchestra. The next year, in 1848, he returned to Copenhagen when war broke out between Prussia and Denmark. In Copenhagen, Gade became director of the Copenhagen Musical Society and established a new orchestra and chorus. He was widely regarded as Denmark's most important composer from the mid-Romantic period. He taught and influenced several Scandinavian composers, including Edvard Grieg, Carl Nielsen and Otto Malling. His own music often shows the influence of both Mendelssohn and Schumann.

His **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.63** is his only complete quartet. Some record companies have taken to calling it No.3 because he composed two incomplete works in 1851 and 1877. The String Quartet in D Major was composed in 1888 two years before his death. It is well written but fine workmanship and sounds good. The first movement, *Allegro moderato* is somewhat like an Idyll, having a pastoral character but the melodic material is rather threadbare. Both the main section of the following Scherzo, *allegretto vivace* as well as the middle section are impressive and sound rather like something Mendelssohn might have written in 1840. The third movement, a well put together *Andante poco lento*, could be called a song without words. The finale begins with a very short *Sostenuto* introduction but is quickly interrupted by a very Mendelssohnian *Allegro con brio* which constitutes the main section, the second subject to which is quite graceful and there is also a lilting third theme. A decent work rather dated for its composition though perhaps Gade could be forgiven since he was already an old man. The work presents no real technical challenges and will please amateur players. Could be performed in concert.

On the manuscript of Niels Gade's 1840 tone poem for string quartet are the words **Willkommen un Abschied** (Welcome and Farewell). They were taken from the title of the famous love poem written by Goethe in 1771. Schubert set the words to music and they clearly inspired the young 23 year old Gade. By the opening movement, *Allegro di molto*, Gade wrote the words from the first verse of the poem, "Es schlug mein Herz, geschwind zu Pferde! ...In meinem Herz welchem Glut!" (With pounding heart, I mounted my horse...Within my heart what passion burned). The fast, rising scale passages in the music clearly describe the rider's passion and the urgency with which he rode. Not really a great success. In the middle movement, *Adagio con espressione*, Gade quotes from the poem again, "Dich sah ich und die milde Freude...Und Zartlichkeit für mich, ihr Götter!! Ich hofft es, ich verdient es nicht!," (I saw you and my heart gladdened...And love for me, Oh God! I hoped for but dared not ask). In the finale, *Serenata scherzando*, the music is mostly in the minor and Gade quotes the words from the last verse of the poem, "Verengt der Abschied mir das Herz...und sahst mir nach mit nassem Blick: Und doch, welch Glück, gelibt zu werden! Und lieben, Gotter, welch ein Glück." (Alas, the ache of parting came...and follows me with tearful eyes. But what luck it is to love, love itself is a gift). This is more a curiosity than anything else.



Hans Gál (1890-1987) was born in the small village of Brunn am Gebirge, just outside of Vienna. He was trained in that metropolis at the New Vienna Conservatory where he taught for some time. Later, with the support of such important musicians as Wilhelm Furtwangler, Richard Strauss and others, he obtained the directorship of the Mainz Conservatory. Gál composed in nearly every genre and his operas were particularly popular during the 1920's.

Upon Hitler's rise to power, Gál was forced to leave Germany and eventually emigrated to Britain, teaching at the Edinburgh Music Conservatory for many years.

His **Five Intermezzi for String Quartet, Op.10** were composed in 1914. They consist of five short to medium length movements which together make up a Serenade equal in length of a standard string quartet. They are quite well-written, with excellent in melodies and present no technical hurdles for performance. They should be particularly appealing to amateurs, but are of such a high quality that they deserve concert performance by professionals. Briefly, of particular interest is the main theme of No.2 (Andantino) with its exotic tonal color. The melody from the middle section of No.3 (Presto) is delightful and a melody which one will not soon forget is the lyrical Brahmsian theme of No.5 (Allegretto con grazia). The fine tonal qualities and charming rhythms of these intermezzi are indeed praiseworthy.

String Quartet No.1 in f minor, Op.16 was published in 1924 but was completed at the end of 1916. Although the tonalities of the Quartet are certainly post-Brahmsian, it nonetheless is somewhat in the style of Brahms, it is also indebted to Schubert and to the general musical milieu of 19th century Vienna. The first movement, Moderato ma con passione, has a rich, lyrical main theme which is quite inspired. The second movement, Molto vivace, is a scherzo which can trace its roots back to Schubert and provides a pleasant interlude. The appealing third movement, Adagio, is full of warmth and affection. The melodies of the finale, Allegro energico, un poco sostenuto, are imbued with humor and good feeling. Of its kind and time this is a first rate work which can stand alongside of works of Weigl, Zemlinsky, and others from this period, circa 1918.

His **String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op.35** was completed in 1929 and is in five movements. It is by no means atonal but its tonality is no longer traditional but rather astringent. From the names of the first three movements, one gets the impression that he is writing a neo Baroque work. However, this is certainly not the case from a tonal standpoint. The first movement, Preludio e poco agitato, is rather angular and for the most part acerbic, though there are some lyrical moments. It is rather prolix. The second movement, Toccata, vivace ma non troppo, is edgy and nervous. The thematic material is easier to make sense of. The third movement, Canzone, andante, has a languid, doleful mood. This is followed by an Intermezzo, capriccio presto. There are a lot of pounding double stops and it has the same overall quality as the Toccata. The middle section stands out not only because it is lyrical but also because it comes closest to traditional tonality. The finale, Rondo, allegretto is an upbeat, relaxed dance-like movement. This would be a tough work for the average amateur. In concert in might replace a Bartok.

String Quartet No.3 in b minor, Op.95 was finished in 1969. In the intervening forty years since he had composed a quartet, much had changed. He had been forced to emigrate from Germany, where he had enjoyed a reputation as one of its leading musicians to Edinburgh. Further, attitudes toward music had changed as well. This is a much more approachable work than No.2. One can follow the themes which though perhaps are on the border are certainly traditional tonal. The opening movement, Energico, allegro molto moderato, has several appealing themes and overall is an excellent movement. The second movement,

Scherzando, grazioso e leggiero, is a relaxed, upbeat, playful affair. This is followed by a slow movement, Cantabile, adagio. A long melancholy solo opens affairs. The music wanders somewhat without discernable form. The finale, Con umore, Allegretto, is a kind of neoclassical rondo. Overall, this is a work to which audiences will respond and should be brought into the concert hall. Experienced amateurs should manage it without difficulty.

String Quartet No.4, Op.99 dates from 1972. The first movement Legend, Adagio-Allegro, begins with a longish, somewhat sad mood air, perhaps with a sense of mystery, but it is hard to identify any theme, the Allegro is more upbeat, but again it is difficult to piece together any discernable theme. The Burlesque-vivace which follows is nervous, the thematic material is a bit easier to make sense of which makes it more appealing than the first movement. The lovely slow movement, Elegy, lento, though tinged with sadness, has no sense of tragedy, but does have a kind of depressed funereal quality. There are several very lovely moments. The finale, Capriccio fugato, allegro con spirito, exudes a busy, bustling theme handled with great plasticity. One might call the style a mix of neo-neo classicism and neo-neo romanticism. Could be brought to concert and played by experienced amateurs.



Florian Leopold Gassmann (1729-1774) was born in the Austrian Bohemian town of Brux. He was active in Venice but eventually moved to Vienna. Among his students was Antonio Salieri. Apparently a favorite of the Habsburgs, he was appointed Court Composer and Conductor. He is usually referred to by reference sources as having been a highly respected composer in mid-18th Century Vienna. Though primarily known as a composer of ballet and opera, he is said to have composed some 40 string quartets. Walter Höckner's famous Album for String Quartet includes one of Gassmann's quartets. Several have been recorded and reprinted but it is hard to understand why. They are unremarkable. They are all in three movements. None of them have a memorable melody. They are not really written in what we have come to regard as quartet style. They sound more like undistinguished divertimenti for string orchestra. If you wish to know why Gassmann has been forgotten, compare these amiable, elegant works which are devoid of any originality or interest with the fledgling efforts of Haydn, the Op.1 or Op.2 Quartets. There is no comparison: Game, set, and match Haydn. There is no reason to resuscitate Gassmann's quartets, not even for historical reasons.



Anton Gatscha (1882-1922) It is highly unlikely that any musician outside of Austria has ever heard of him and probably not too many within Austria either. He was born at Langendorf Castle on the Schwarenberg estate in Bohemia where his father worked Gatscha was educated in Vienna taking doctorate in philosophy and then worked as a college teacher. At the same, he studied composition at the Vienna Conservatory with Robert Fuchs.

His **String Quartet in F Major, Op.6**, subtitled Das Leben, ein Traum (life is but a dream) certainly is worthy of being heard. The Quartet is in the neo romantic style. The first movement, Allegro, opens confidently, a little playfully a la Haydn, and in keeping with the musical motto "Life Is But a Dream." In essence tuneful, the music begins to wax rhapsodic but still within the confines of a carefully crafted atmosphere befitting of Brahms. Movements two and three show some influence of Mahler in their unhurried, moderate dancing quality. The last movement Allegretto grazioso con variazione begins delicately: It is a variation movement in the traditional sense. This is a rather good work

which can be recommended for concert performance and to amateurs.



Franz Xaver Gebel (1787-1843) was born in the small Silesian town of Furstenau not far from Breslau. Little is known of his musical training but he is thought to have studied with the Abbé Vogler and Albrechtsberger. From 1810-1813, he was the music director of the Leopoldstädter Theater in Vienna. From 1813-17, he held similar positions in Pest and Lemberg. In 1817, Gebel moved to Moscow where he spent the rest of his life. There he

worked as piano teacher, composer, theorist and organizer of chamber music concerts. He is said to have played an important role in introducing the works of Beethoven to Muscovite audiences. He wrote eight string quintets, the two cello version, several of which are quite good. It is thought that he wrote three string quartets, but only two have survived.

His **String Quartet No.1 in D Major** composed around 1815 and dates from his time in Vienna. The opening movement a kind of Haydnesque Allegro vivace is pleasant enough but the melodic material is ordinary. The same can be said for the Menuetto presto which follows. An Andante which comes next is perhaps somewhat better but not great. The finale, Presto, features lots of fast moving triplets but little in the way of a good theme. I cannot recommend this work.

According to Gebel's biographer his **String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major, Op.27** came some twenty years later around 1840. I find this hard to credit. It sounds as if it were written at exactly the same time as his first quartet. The opening movement, Allegro con brio, has lots of brio but lacks any kind of good thematic material. The Larghetto which comes next is marginally better. The finale two movements, Menuetto and Allegro are forgettable. These quartets in no way match the quality of his string quintets and do not deserve revival.

Joseph Gehot (1756-1820) was born in Brussels and studied the violin as a boy. His talent led to his being trained by the music master of the Habsburg Archduke governing what was then the Austrian Low Lands. In the early 1780s, Gehot moved to London and became one of many familiar, if not prominent, figures on the London music scene during the ensuing decade. In 1792, he emigrated to the U.S. where he remained to his death. Several scholars have written that he a composer of the pre-classical era. One would not have thought that Gehot, who was born in Brussels the same year as Mozart and some 32 years after Haydn, would have fallen into the classical era. If by pre-classical music what is meant is Mannheim-style music not evidencing the advances made by Mozart and Haydn in the 1780s, his quartets qualify. He composed at least twelve and most likely more than that. I have played a few, and heard others, to wit **Op.1 Nos. 2 & 4, Op.7 Nos.4 & 6**. They are in either three (fast-slow-fast) or two movements. Almost all of the melodic material is given to the first violin. The music sounds like some of the Mannheim composers such as Stamitz or perhaps like some of the lesser Viennese composing in the 1750s & 1760s, but certainly not like Mozart or Haydn. It may be said that while his thematic material will not strike anyone as sounding original, the music is pleasant. He does not write with a voice that is identifiable. His music could have been composed by any number of faceless souls writing before 1780. It is unlikely to hold the interest modern day listeners or players. There are too many other worthwhile works to justify any time spent here.

Friedrich Gernsheim (1839-1916) was born in the German city of Worms. Friedrich Gernsheim (1839-1916) is a composer whose music was held in the highest regard by his colleagues and



critics during his lifetime. Brahms and Max Bruch to name but two shared Altman's high regard. But Gernsheim had two misfortunes, which led to his music not obtaining the reputation it might have. The first was to be born within a decade of Brahms. A misfortune because, in what is surely an extraordinary phenomenon, virtually every composer in the German-speaking countries born within a decade either side of Brahms were so eclipsed by

him that their reputation and their music all but disappeared when that era was over. Names such as Rheinberger, Reinecke, Kiel, Bruch, Dessoff, and Herzogenberg, among many others, come to mind. His second misfortune was that being Jewish, his music was officially banned during the Nazi era, which insured that it would fall into oblivion. It is only now a century after his death that it is being rediscovered with great delight. Gernsheim, somewhat of a piano and violin virtuoso as a child, was eventually educated at the famous Leipzig Conservatory where he studied piano with Ignaz Moscheles and violin with Ferdinand David. After graduating, he continued his studies in Paris, getting to know Saint Saëns, Lalo, Liszt and Rossini. Despite his admiration for France and the French, he returned to Germany and during the course of his life, he held academic and conducting positions in Cologne, Rotterdam and finally Berlin. He wrote five string quartets which span most of his long composing career from about 1863 to 1914.

His **String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.25** dates from 1871. The opening movement, Allegro energico opens in powerful fashion and is characterized more by his use of rhythm than lyricism. The second movement, an Andante con moto, is a lament, a song without words. The third movement, Allegro, is a scherzo which captivates by means of its rhythm, while melody of the trio section brings a sense of urgency. The climax of the quartet is its finale, subtitled Rondo all'Ongarese--Allegro molto vivace. In true Hungarian style, Gernsheim alters the tempo from slow to presto to prestissimo with great effect. All of the themes are typically Hungarian and provide a fine contrast with each other. Not his best but a good work, strong enough for concert and recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op.31 was published in 1875. The first movement, Allegro, characterized by its elegiac mood of restless energy, and while the music, in parts, shows the influence of Brahms it nevertheless is fresh sounding. A lovely Adagio follows. The passionate middle section is especially impressive. Next is a muscular and very dramatic scherzo, Molto vivace ed energico, of which the second theme is especially fine. A short, dreamy trio section releases the tension and provides excellent contrast. The rhythmic finale, Allegro moderato e molto energico, seems to begin where the scherzo has left off—it almost seems part of the same movement right down to the introduction of the lovely and lyrical second theme. There is also an ingenious fugal section in the middle of this captivating movement. This is an absolutely first rate work which belongs in the repertoire and on the concert stage. Also good for amateurs

. **String Quartet No.3 in F Major, Op.51** was composed in 1885. In form, it might well be called a Phantasy Quartet. The lyrical main theme to the first movement, Allegro, begins in general fashion but later becomes emotionally charged. The second movement, though marked Allegro scherzando, is in reality a very beautiful, rich Intermezzo. The lively trio section is actually quicker in tempo than the main part. Schumann's Opp.41 No.1 and 3 may well have served as models for Gernsheim's own slow movement, Andante molto cantabile. The finale is a very artistic Theme and Variations. This is a beautiful work, but where it counts, namely the outer movements, it lacks a certain fire, which perhaps might not make it a candidate for concert.

String Quartet No.4 in e minor, Op.66 was composed in 1899 and published in 1900. The thematic material and other aspects are particularly fine. The main theme of the opening movement, *Allegro ma molto moderato ed espresso*, immediately makes a strong impression while the lyrical second subject is more introspective. The *Allegretto scherzando, ma non troppo vivo e sempre molto leggero* which comes next is a highly spirited, picqant-sounding scherzo with a trio that has a charming melody full of feeling. The third movement, *Andante grave*, is a captivating theme and variations. The use of tone color is particularly striking. The finale, *Allegro con brio*, begins as a kind of quick military march. The middle section is calmer but full of warmth. A first rate work good for concert and home.

String Quartet No.5 in A Major, Op.83 dates from 1911 and is a really astonishing work, especially in view of the fact that the composer was then 72 years old. The first movement, *Allegro non troppo*, is built on two very melodious and engaging themes. A very original scherzo, *Molto vivace*, follows. It has the aura of program music in that it strongly brings to mind ghosts and spirits and breezes whispering through leaves. The trio section, a vigorous march, comes as a great surprise and provides excellent contrast. The slow movement, *Andante*, has themes of real distinction. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, is a dashing movement. The first subject resembles a whirling, playful arabesque. The second subject is even more original with its unusual rhythmic and tonal effects. A first rate work, excellent concert and for amateurs.



George Gershwin (1898-1937) is, of course, famous but not for having written anything for string quartet. However, he did write one stunning short work, his **Lullaby for String Quartet**, which every quartet group should try to play at least once. It was written in 1918,

while he was studying with the Hungarian composer Edward Kilenyi. Not published during his lifetime, it was nonetheless played by various quartets at private parties held by people

in Gershwin's social circle and it took on a new life as an aria in Gershwin's next classical attempt, the opera *Blue Monday*. In the early 1960's Ira Gershwin invited the harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler to play an arrangement for harmonica and strings, and the original string quartet version finally received its first public performance at the Library of Congress when the Juilliard Quartet played it there in 1967. The work is in a three part, ABA form, with the middle part moving to a new key. The harmonies owe much to the French Impressionist composers but the principle theme alludes in a very subtle way to American popular music. The syncopations are a very gentle imitation of the much snappier rhythms of ragtime. A great encore or shorter work.



Felice Giardini (1716-1796) was born in Turin. When it became clear that he was a child prodigy, his father sent him to Milan. There he studied singing, harpsichord and violin but it was on the latter that he became a famous virtuoso. By the age of 12, he was already playing in theater orchestras. In a famous incident about this time, Giardini, who was serving as assistant concertmaster

during an opera, played a solo passage for violin, the composer Jomelli had written. He decided to show off his skills and improvised several bravura variations which Jomelli had not written. Although the audience applauded loudly, Jomelli, who happened to be there, was not pleased and suddenly stood up and slapped the young man in the face. Giardini, years later, remarked, "it was the most instructive lesson I ever received from a great artist." During the 1750s, Giardini toured Europe as a violinist, scor-

ing successes in Paris, Berlin, and especially in England where he eventually settled. For many years, he served as the concertmaster and director of the Italian Opera in London and gave solo concerts under the auspices of J.C. Bach with whom he was a close friend. He was widely regarded as the greatest musical performing artist before the public. (1755-1770). In 1784, he returned to Naples to run a theater, however, there he encountered financial setbacks. In 1793, he returned to England to try his luck. But times had changed and he was no longer remembered. He then went to Russia, but again had little luck, dying in Moscow in 1796. He may have written as many as twenty string quartets, but only a few are available.

I published a new edition of Giardini's **String Quartet No.6 in E flat Major** was part of a collection of six quartets by three different composers brought out in 1776 by the prominent London publisher William Napier. The three--Johann Christian Bach, Carl Friedrich Abel and Giardini-- who were, at the time, the three most important composers then living and working in England. Giardini's quartet was the sixth of the set and not his sixth string quartet but has come down to us with that number. It is different from the other five quartets, which used the harpsichord and the cello to provide the basso continuo. Giardini not only dispenses with the harpsichord, but also frees up the cello, giving it extensive solos, a practice well ahead of its time. The outer movements, *Andante* and *Grazioso*, are elegant and graceful, while the middle movement, *Presto*, is full of energy and excitement. One should keep in mind that Giardini was born in 1716, Though he had a long life and died after Mozart did, he is not a classical era composer, but a pre-classical composer. With that in mind, this is from a historical standpoint, an important work.



Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983) was born in Buenos Aires. He studied at the William Conservatory there and then in U.S. with Aaron Copeland. For many years he taught in Buenos Aires before moving to the States and then to Switzerland. Among his students was Astor Piazzola.

His **String Quartet No.1, Op.20** dates from 1948. He supposedly was during his early works influenced by the dance music of

Argentina. The opening movement begins with an introduction, violent and declamatory in effect; the *allegro* begins with a vehement, almost savage melody played over hammered chords. The second subject is dance-like, but it is a rough, stamping dance; its development remains agitated, and the recapitulation is in reverse order, leading to a coda restating the opening declamatory statement. Movement two is a spectral scherzo, with rapid repeated-note figures, unusual bowing effects, and nervous rhythms. The third movement, a nocturne, finally breaks the aggressive mood with a lyrical melody for violin; this entire movement is based on the composer's characteristic "guitar" chord -- the tones of the six open strings of the instrument played simultaneously. The finale is a rondo in the flavor of Argentine rural dances, featuring contrasting episodes in 5/8 time. An interesting work to be heard in concert but well beyond amateur players.

String Quartet No.2, Op.27 came ten years later in 1958. It was commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation and was premiered by the Juilliard Quartet at the 1958 Inter-American Music Festival in Washington, D.C. It was written at a time when Ginastera was consolidating his second stylistic period, known as his "international" style, when he used the twelve-tone system. Here, he used it in a free manner, mainly to generate themes. Suffice it to say that this is not a work which will appeal to some and is beyond the ability of amateurs. It is strident, angry and violent. He must have been suffering a lot.



Louis Glass (1864-1936) The Danish composer, pianist and cellist Louis Glass (1864-1936) received his training from his father, also a pianist and composer, Niels Gade, and several distinguished teachers at the Brussels Conservatory including the pianist Joseph Wieniawski, Henryk's brother. While in Belgium, he discovered the music of Cesar Franck and, not long after, that of Anton Bruckner. The music of both greatly influ-

enced his own style. For several years he was one of Denmark's leading concert pianists until a paralysis in one arm made him retire from the stage. He then devoted himself primarily to composing although he continued to play chamber music throughout his life. Besides four string quartets. The first three apparently—Opp.10, 18 and 23 apparently have never been published, although No.3 has been recorded.

String Quartet No.4 in f# minor, Op.35 was composed in 1907. It is the only one in print. The spacious opening Allegro, *ma non troppo* is redolent of Bruckner, not tonally, but in the leisurely way in which the many themes are developed. The highly lyrical second movement, Adagio, *molto espressivo*, begins with a very spacious presentation of what appears to be a folk theme. It is calm and assured. The second subject has a dark and mystical quality with a strange section where the strings are made to sound like a reed organ. The rhythmically disjointed main theme to the Scherzo that follows has an imploring, pleading and downcast quality to it. The plucked trio section provides an excellent contrast. The huge finale, Allegro *marziale*, almost breaks the bounds of chamber music, not only because of its length but also by virtue of the wealth of wonderful thematic material presented, all of it highly effective. This quartet is a masterwork which belongs in every performing quartet's repertoire.



Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936) was born in Saint Petersburg, the son of a wealthy book publisher. He began studying piano at the age of nine and started composing not long after. It was Mili Balakirev, founder of the Russian nationalist group "The Mighty Five" who brought Glazunov to the attention of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Korsakov, who immediately recognized the boy's talent, took him on as a private student. During his lifetime, he obtained world-

wide fame. He eventually became a professor and then the director of the St Petersburg Conservatory. No longer remembered is the fact that Glazunov was almost universally acknowledged as a great prodigy. Along with Rimsky-Korsakov, he finished some of Alexander Borodin's greatest works, among them the Third Symphony and the opera Prince Igor, including its popular piece, the Polovtsian Dances. With the onset of the Russian Revolution, Glazunov did not abandon Russia, but remained active as a conductor, conducting concerts in factories, clubs and Red Army posts. After World War I, he was instrumental in the reorganization of the Conservatory, improving its curriculum and raising standards. Eventually, he settled in Paris. If one excludes his instrumental sonatas, virtually all of Glazunov's chamber music was composed for string quartet. The sole exceptions being his Quartet In Modo Religioso for trumpet, two horns and trombone, and the String Quintet for two violins, viola and two cellos. Given that Glazunov's own instrument was the piano, it is interesting to note that he never penned a piano trio, quartet or quintet.

Of his works for string quartet, there are seven "proper" string quartets, two additional larger works—the **Five Novelettes** and the **Suite**, and numerous occasional pieces. The latter are generally one movement affairs which appear in collections such as **Les Vendredis** or **Jour de Fete**. These collections consist of a number of movements each by a different contributor. Most often

these were Rimsky-Korsakov and Liadov. Given this dichotomy of proper quartets and occasional pieces, it would seem that the two most cogent approaches to a discussion of his works for string quartet would be either a chronological presentation or a discussion which places the works into their two separate categories and treats them individually. The first approach, arguably, has the potential advantage of highlighting the composers development over the years. However, a chronological integration which involves the occasional pieces would be misleading because the purpose and goal of these compositions were very different from the more serious and formal works for string quartet. Therefore, I have opted for the second approach and will discuss the so-called proper string quartets separately from the occasional pieces. It is interesting to note that in Russian and the former Soviet Union, Glazunov's string quartets featured regularly on concert programs, yet in the West, one rarely, if ever, hears them performed live.

String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.1 was composed sometime in 1881 and premiered the following year. It is dedicated to Madame Ludmilla Schestakov, maiden name Glinka. She was Mikhail Glinka's sister. To put this work into its historical context, we must consider that Glazunov had just finished his formal studies with Rimsky-Korsakov. The quartet begins with an introduction, *Andantino moderato*, which is closely related to the main theme of the following Allegro moderato. The treatment of the main theme is quite plastic. Of particular note is the use of fifths in the accompaniment of the cheerful melodies, especially the second theme. This was a technique of which Korsakov and his students were particularly fond. It undeniably helps to create an exotic oriental atmosphere to which the Russians were attracted. Rather than placing a slow movement next, Glazunov opts for a lively Scherzo, *vivace*. The brisk, main theme recalls Schumann: The second theme, though somewhat threadbare, does provide a good contrast. Glazunov omits writing a trio and contents himself with alternating these two subjects several times, ending with the 2nd theme. The following Andante serves as the slow movement. It is perhaps based on a folksong. Though attractive, Glazunov does not develop it, but rather repeats it over and over, each time with slight changes. It is a good thing that the movement is quite short because the treatment of the theme is barely enough to hold one's interest for the duration. The main subject of the finale, Moderato, also has the appearance of being based on a Russian folk melody. This becomes more obvious later in the movement when the cello restates the melody in straight quarter notes. The second theme is more lyrical and relieves the angular rhythmic quality of the first. To sum up, it cannot be argued that this is a great work. However, it is appealing and will be of interest to amateurs and perhaps strong enough to merit a very occasional concert performance. Certainly, it was a fine effort for a 17 year old composer.

String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.10, dedicated to his publisher M.P. Belaiev, was composed in 1883. The fingerprints of Rimsky-Korsakov are still all over the music. The first movement, Allegro *non troppo*, really does not sound at all different from the First Quartet. The opening theme is only two measures in length. Though it is clearly Russian, melodically it is rather weak, and it becomes monotonous quite quickly, largely due to the fact that it is repeated at least a dozen times, without alteration, in the various voices before Glazunov moves on. The second subject suffers from exactly the same treatment as the first, in addition to which it sounds rather closely related to it. The constant repetition without development truly is mystifying. In my opinion, this is a very serious defect, given the melodic weakness of the music. When one hears quartets from the same period by some of Korsakov's other students, for example Kopylov or Sokolov, one can clearly hear how much weaker Glazunov's effort is. The second movement, Scherzo, allegro, depends on its rhythm to carry the music along. While the melodic material is

not all that memorable, it is strong enough, given the rhythmic interest. In the trio, Glazunov succeeds in creating beautiful music. The theme, which is briefly introduced by the cello, is then elaborated by the first violin. It's a good movement and stands out alongside the preceding one. Next comes a slow movement, *Adagio molto*. The opening melody, played muted, is reflective and tinged with melancholy, but it cannot be styled as more than pedestrian despite the lovely way in which it is presented. The somewhat quicker middle section, during which the second subject is initially presented high in the register of the first violin, is more effective. Again, in the finale, *Allegro moderato*, the melodic material is repeated several times, and once again, it works against the effectiveness of the music. The opening, dance-like theme, given out by the viola, has many of the qualities of those found in the first two movements. It is Russian-sounding, but its rhythm is such that the constant repetition quickly makes it monotonous. The second theme, unfortunately does not provide very good contrast. I cannot recommend this quartet.

Seven years and sixteen opus numbers separate the Second Quartet from **String Quartet No.3 in G Major, Op.26**. Composed in 1890, it is better known by its French subtitle *Quatour Slav* (Slave in the French). Glazunov finally produced a brilliantly executed quartet which is also highly appealing. Despite its subtitle, with the exception of the last movement, the quartet is not program music, but rather music which consists entirely of Slavic melodies. The opening movement, *Moderato*, begins in an almost elegiac mood. This is dissipated by the appearance of the more lively second theme with its use of pizzicato chords in all of the voices. For the first time, Glazunov places a slow movement, *Interludium*, second. The movement impresses on two counts: First, the main theme, introduced by the cello and then elaborated by the first violin is sounds, as if it is straight out of the Russian Orthodox liturgy. Its chorale-like treatment creates the peaceful, somber aura of a church service. Second, its—unusual for Glazunov—conciseness leaves no feeling of padding or the use of unnecessary notes to fill out the movement. Instead, the music flows along, even in its pesante passages, effortlessly and concludes in orderly fashion. The third movement, *Alla Mazurka, allegretto*, is even more appealing. The main theme is bright, dance-like and lively. Interest is sustained throughout largely on the strength of the part-writing, very effective tempi changes, and lastly the melodic and rhythmic material which is in no way hackneyed as the example from the somewhat quicker middle section reveals.

Here, all four voices are given a series of double-stops to play simultaneously. The effect is quite orchestral, but also very striking. The finale, *Allegro moderato* and subtitled *Une fête Slave*, is clearly the quartet's center of gravity and no doubt led to the subtitle that the work as a whole has traveled under. While sections of the third movement, as previously noted, approached the orchestral on occasion, the finale is for long stretches very densely scored, so much so, that one is struck by its potential suitability for a string orchestra. However, this was hardly accidental as here, Glazunov was obviously trying to create a tone picture of a village festival in all its various moods. I can recommend this quartet to professionals and amateurs alike. It is easy to put together and presents no special technical difficulties.

String Quartet No.4 in a minor, Op.64 was composed four years after No.3 and was published around 1899. It was dedicated to his friend, the prominent music critic Vladimir Stasov. The opening movement, *Andante-Allegro*, begins with a series of very sad chords which are made more dramatic by a surprise accent and downward chromatic passages. Glazunov related that when he played the work for Stasov on the piano, his friend exclaimed, upon hearing the opening chords, "What has happened to you? These are cries of despair." It is almost impossible to determine where the *Andante* leaves off and the *Allegro* begins, but the *Andante* contains the seeds of both the main theme to the *Allegro* as well as the second subject. The main theme is both

powerful and passionate, while the second theme more lyrical. As the music progresses the heavy mood and character changes as it shifts from minor into major. The slow movement, an *Andante*, is a fine example of Glazunov's mature style. Though it starts with an aura of blissful peace, as the movement progresses there are waves of surging energy followed by releases which softly die away. Frequent changes of tempo and dynamics also create a sense of unease. Next is a brilliant and exciting *Scherzo vivace*, very Russian in flavor, it is a kind of *perpetuum mobile*. The short trio section has a lovely melody, also quite Russian, given to the cello. Played by itself, this movement would make a tremendous encore. The finale, an *Allegro*, begins with a series of desolate chords, which though not an exact quote, are very similar to those of the opening of the first movement. The intent seems clearly to create a cyclic work, though perhaps not so strictly as Cesar Franck. The gloomy mood quickly gives way to a series of flowing and bright melodies, some energetic and dance-like, others lyrical and poetic. This is a work which can make a strong claim for inclusion into the standard repertoire.

String Quartet No.5 in d minor, Op.70 appeared in 1900. It opens with a doleful introduction, *Andante*. The main theme is presented in the form of a fugue and first stated by the viola. The mood and quality of the writing reminds one of Tchaikovsky. The second subject marked *dolce*, is initially entrusted to the first violin. The movement is completed by a magnificent *stretto* which carries all before it. The *Scherzo allegretto* which follows provides a tremendous contrast to the preceding *Allegro*. The playful main theme brings to mind the *Scherzo* of Beethoven's Op.18 No.4. And, though simple, it is nonetheless handled with great cleverness. The trio section with its rich melodic content, provides a very effective contrast to the *schermo*. The third movement is an *Adagio*. It is contemplative and quiet and Glazunov takes great care to preserve the tranquil and poetic quality of the music from start to finish. The finale, *Allegro*, as the introduction to the first movement, introduces the gay main theme in fugal form. Again one suspects that the theme is taken from a folk dance. The music is bright in mood, even playful, however, it must be admitted that it requires very clean execution to be effective. The quartet is equally as fine as the Fourth, and certainly merits concert performance. Twenty years were to pass before Glazunov was to compose another string quartet. And these were, of course, eventful years in Russia. First were the turbulent years of the stormy failed revolution of 1905, followed by constant unrest, then the outbreak of the First World War which culminated in the Russian Revolution. By 1920, Lenin was leading the newly constituted Soviet Union. These were hard years for everyone then in Russia. Glazunov was still at the Conservatory and was generally regarded as the foremost living Russian composer. Some years before, a group of players had formed a quartet taking Glazunov's name as their own and dedicating themselves to performing his works.

It was to the Glazunov String Quartet that the composer dedicated his **String Quartet No.6 in B flat Major, Op.106** which was composed in 1920-21. Although in this work we find the tonalities are sometimes slightly more advanced than before but by and large it represents no real advance over his previous two quartets. The opening *Allegro* has for its main theme a happy, somewhat bombastic, melody whose plodding advance is lightened by quick downward chromatic passages which interrupt the proceedings. Of particular note is a stunning cello solo which creates the dramatic climax of the movement. Perhaps the most striking and memorable movement is the second, *Intermezzo* in the Russian Style. The *intermezzo* integrates two very Russian themes. The first is march-like while the second recalls the opening of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. For the most part, Glazunov uses a light touch much in keeping with the traditional *intermezzo*. Particularly telling use is made of pizzicato throughout. A slow movement, *Andante piangevole*, follows. The sad

and lethargic main theme is presented in fugal form. Here the use of chromaticism is particularly prominent and some of the more advanced—at least for Glazunov—tonalities are created through its use. The subdued mood, throughout this movement, is never lightened. The finale is a Theme with Variations—Allegro. Composers who have attempted to end their works with this kind of structure rarely make an unqualified success of it. It seems that theme and variations are better suited to middle movements. It can even be argued that Beethoven in Op.74 and Schubert in D.887 did not entirely succeed. In any event, this is a massive movement. Glazunov's theme, while not threadbare, on the other hand cannot be styled as particularly memorable. And unfortunately, the variations, up until almost the very end, do not present a great deal of contrast. While different techniques, which might have served to create good contrast, are employed, because most of the variations are of moderate tempo, their effect is muted. It is only toward the end of this movement, which takes a quarter of an hour to play, that Glazunov hits his stride with a lively scherzo-like theme which he turns into a coda. In sum, the melodic material is sufficient to support the composer's efforts, but it must be admitted that a certain inspiration and appeal, so obvious in Nos. 4 and 5, are missing here.

After leaving Russia and finally settling in Paris, Glazunov wrote two more works for string quartet. The first, in 1928, was a one movement **Elegy in Memory of M.P. Belaiev** and the second was **String Quartet No.7 in C Major, Op.107**. This was composed two years later in 1930. Each of the four movements has a programmatic title: Remembrance of the Past, Breath of Spring, In a Mysterious Forest, and Russian Festivity. While all this sounds quite promising, sadly, this is a disappointing work, a definite step backward from No.6 not to mention Nos. 4 and 5. Many of the same problems which were apparent in the first two quartets are to be found here, despite Glazunov's best efforts. Remembrance of the Past (translated by the Soviet State Music Publishers as Recollection of the Past) begins with an Adagio introduction, not particularly slow, tinged with sadness. It is presented as in many of his other works in the form of a fugue, this time with the cello given the lead. Perhaps the mood could be described as the feeling one might have waiting at a bus station after having had a nice time at a party, and feeling a little sad that it could not still be going on. The main part of the movement, Allegro giocoso, though brighter and with a lively melody, nonetheless fails to impress because of the ordinariness of the material. There are brief episodes where the music builds in volume and density of scoring, becoming orchestral, much in the way that Quartet Slav does, but because the material does not convince, the effect is not fetching. Shortening this lengthy movement would have made these faults less egregious. The second movement, The Breath of Spring, Andante affetuoso, has for its main theme a sweet, somewhat cloying, melody which appears to wander aimlessly without leading to any kind of climax. Though not obvious and not so named, it appears to be a set of variations. An Allegro scherzando, In a Mysterious Forest, comes next. As one would expect, it is livelier but in no way captivating, except for the opening measures of the theme, which unfortunately, despite a mood evoking dancing forest sprites, soon becomes quite monotonous. The finale, Moderato, Russian Festivity, unfortunately falls far short of the effect created by a similar finale in Quartet Slav. Again the culprit is to be found in the melodic material. The opening theme, which for a while is played in unison, is dignified but unmemorable. Heavy scoring, particularly in the lower voices, is employed with a mixed effect, creating a loud, unfocused sound some what like an organ. To sum up, although the execution and development of the thematic material is far superior to his first two quartets, the lackluster melodies and a certain weariness mar the outcome.

It is an undeniable fact that Glazunov's best loved, and perhaps his best works for string quartets were not formal string

quartets at all, but occasional or programmatic works, the most famous being his **Op.15 Novelettes** and his **Op.35 Suite**. There appears to be considerable confusion over just how many these works and pieces Glazunov composed and quite possibly the actual amount will never be known. It is said that he penned a piece nearly every week for Belaiev's Friday evening concert banquets. If so, there must be dozens of movements we have never heard or seen, since the Belaiev evenings continued for a period of more than twenty years. It was only after Belaiev's death that Glazunov and Rimsky Korsakov selected what they considered to be the best 15 works of those submitted by Korsakov. Borodin, Glazunov, Liadov and others. These were then published in two volumes as **Les Vendredis**. The most serious confusion concerns the Novelettes and when they were composed. This confusion is in part due to the fact that they consist of five movements.

There is also an earlier set of five pieces for string quartet, sometimes known as "Suite", which was composed between 1879-1881, in Russia this work which has no opus number, is more often known as **Five Pieces for String Quartet** and only occasionally called Suite. I believe this is so as to distinguish it from Glazunov's Op.35 which is known as Suite for String Quartet and which also consists of five movements. When one considers the Five Pieces were begun by a boy of 14 and completed when he was 16, one must admit that their maturity is truly amazing. While not as ambitious as either the Novelettes or the Op.35 Suite, the Five Pieces are nonetheless quite fine and show tremendous compositional skill. Of course, we cannot know how much help Rimsky Korsakov gave to the boy, but we can certainly appreciate how impressed he must have been with his student's talent. The first movement is a pensive and reflective Lento. The second movement is a Scherzo presto which makes a fine impression. The following Intermezzo, in which the cello is consistently given the lead, makes an even greater impression. A brief Allegro vivace scherzo leads to the work's crowning glory, a Hungarian scherzo. The main theme is not at all Hungarian and what we have is a rather straight forward Russian scherzo. It is the middle section which combines an evocative orientale with a very typical Hungarian slow dance. This movement would make an excellent encore. Relatively short, the Five Pieces are strong enough for concert and certainly would appeal to amateurs.

Next we have what is Glazunov's best known work for string quartet, his **Five Novelettes, Op.15**. They date from 1886. The opening movement is entitled Alla spagnuola, allegretto. It is hard to imagine a more typical treatment. The cello opens with guitar like pizzicato accompaniment to the unmistakably Spanish rhythm of the main theme. In the short trio section, the cello is given the melody in its treble register which makes it all the more striking. The second movement, Orientale, allegro con brio, also begins with pizzicato in the cello, the main melody is not particularly oriental but rather more like a rustic peasant dance. The middle section does have a more oriental sounding melody, but it is not particularly exotic or captivating and certainly does not have the heavy exotic perfume of the Orientale found in his Op.35 Suite. The third movement, Interludium in modo antico, Andante, uses the Dorian scale and hints at the music of the Russian orthodox service. There is a sense of solemnity and dignity. This is followed by a light-hearted and romantic Valse. The wistful main theme is found high in the violin registers. This is a lengthy movement full of many exquisite vignettes and changes of tempi all wonderfully executed. To my mind this is the most impressive movement of the set. The finale, All ungherese also begins with a pizzicato accompaniment. The main subject is in no way Hungarian but rather a rustic, energetic Russian folk melody. It reminds me of a similar movement in Quartet Slav which he entitled Une fête Slave. But buried deep in the middle of the movement is a brief, and perhaps not instantly recognizable Hungarian interlude. Like the movement in the earlier Five Pieces, it is a slow Hungarian dance. This, too, is an effective movement

which provides a suitable conclusion to the work. In my opinion, the Five Pieces for String Quartet is an altogether better work than the Novelettes. Nonetheless, its popularity has ensured that it has never been out of print.

The year after completing the Novelettes (1887), Glazunov began work on another set of pieces for string quartet which he completed in 1891. This was the five movement **Suite for String Quartet, Op.35**. The opening movement, Introduction and Fugue, begins with a lovely Andante which is reflective without being sad. Most of the rest of the movement is taken up by a fugue which is based on the same theme as that introduced in the Andante. Although it receives many different treatments, the development simply is not strong enough, in my opinion, to support the length of the fugue. Next, providing a welcome relief and contrast, comes a brilliant Scherzo, allegro. The use of quintuplets and trills passed from voice to voice creates an original and exciting effect. This is followed by an Orientale, Andante. The viola, a prescient choice, is given the haunting main theme to a strumming accompaniment. Both this melody and its rhythm are highly effective. Unlike the Oriental in the Novelettes, the one here is exotic and does conjure up images of the mystical East. This is a very fine movement. The fourth movement, the longest and most ambitious, is a theme and set of five variations: Tranquillo, Mistico, Scherzo, Penseroso and Alla Polacca. The theme is Russian and appealing (see top of next column). While there is nothing particularly wrong with either the Tranquillo or the Penseroso, they do not make as strong an impression as the other three, perhaps because in tempo and mood they are very similar to the treatment of the theme in the opening part of the movement. The other three, however, make a particularly strong impression. The second variation, Mistico, has a soft, high, muted tremolo accompaniment in the violins which serves to create a strong air of mystery. The thematic material is shared by the cello and the viola. A lively and bright Scherzo serves as a palette cleanser while the final variation is a toe-tapping and rollicking ride. For his finale, Glazunov surprisingly chooses a Valse. It begins slowly enough but then becomes quite lively. Soon one realizes from the many tempo changes that follow one another just how wonderful this waltz is. An exciting coda brings the Suite to a close. Although it has in its time been popular, I for one cannot understand why the Suite has never achieved the same popularity as the Novelettes. In my opinion, it is a far stronger work.

The remaining occasional pieces for string quartet all consist of either one movement efforts or of part of a movement in which Glazunov collaborated with other composers. Among the best known of these were the works which appeared in the two volumes of Les Vendredis. The first work of **Volume I of Les Vendredis** is by Glazunov and is entitled **Preludio e Fuga**. It is dedicated to the Belaiev Quartet's first violinist. The prelude is an Adagio of considerable rhythmic complexity. It is not an attempt to faithfully recreate an 18th Century example of this form but nonetheless is a somber affair. The Prelude reminds one of Bach, but a kind of Romanticism nevertheless creeps in. A four part fugue, Moderato, follows. Based on a Russian theme, it, too, is primarily reflective with little vivaciousness. While there is no question as far as technical mastery is concerned, the musical material is not entirely convincing or captivating. But this pensiveness perhaps appeals to Russians, especially when they are deep in their cups. It was a strange choice to place at the front of Volume I, as it is so atypical, at least in mood, of the spirit of the Les Vendredis. Perhaps Glazunov, himself, chose to place it there. The third piece in Volume I, is the perhaps the best known of any of the works which are to be found in either volume. It is the **Les Vendredis Polka**. Apparently hurriedly written on the spot in Belaiev's study while the concert was going on, and then given to him as a surprise present, it is an incredible accomplishment. In three sections, the first by Sokolov, features the viola,

Belaiev's instrument, to whom the main theme is given with a filigree accompaniment in the 1st violin against pizzicato in the other voices. The 2nd and more energetic theme is by Glazunov. The other work by Glazunov to appear in Les Vendredis is the penultimate work in Volume II, entitled **Courante**. It is perhaps his most attractive contribution. The music very successfully captures the rhythmic spirit of this French dance form often characterized by phrases with an unequal grouping of beats and by a certain ambiguity of accent. The main theme presents a stately urbanity.

In 1886, Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Borodin and Glazunov collaborated to create what has become known as **Quatour B-L-A-F**, This four movement work for string quartet was meant as a 50th birthday present for Belaiev. 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. 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 finale, **Allegro**, is by Glazunov. One can hear he worked fairly hard to really make it the show piece of the quartet, and while it is at least as good as Korsakov's opening movement, it is not as good as the middle two movements by Borodin's and Liadov. The second theme, which is quite good, sounds a bit like Chopin.

A 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 based on historical Russian forms. Glazunov contributed the first movement, which is entitled **Le Chanteurs de Noël**. 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 last collaborative work dates from the end of 1898 and was entitled **Variations on a Russian Theme**. 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. The third variation, an **Andantino**, is by Glazunov. Here the viola, with its moving line, presents the main interest. These Variations, which are not very difficult, would make an excellent concert encore and are also available from International.

In 1905, Glazunov wrote a one movement **Elegy, Op.35**, in memory of Belaiev, who had died earlier that year. Although evocative, except for the final measures, it is more reflective than funereal. Though far from weak, the melodic writing is not particularly memorable.



Reinhold Gliere (1875-1956) was born in Kiev where he began his first musical studies with the famous violin teacher Otakar Sevcik. Later he attended the Moscow Conservatory where he studied with Sergei Taneyev, Anton Arensky and Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov. His superb compositional technique was quickly recognized by his teachers and he won several prizes for his early works, including his First String Sextet which took the prestigious Glinka Prize from a jury consisting of Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov and Liadov. Gliere, himself, taught at the Moscow and Kiev conservatories for nearly 40 years. Among his many successful students were Khachaturian, Prokofiev and Miaskovsky.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major, Op.2 dates from 1902. It is full of rich melodies, tonally beautiful and plays well. The opening, Allegro, is brimming with bold harmonies and almost has an operatic quality to it. A scherzo, Allegro, which comes next, is Russian from start to finish. The Theme and Variations, Andantino, which comprise the third movement, are not only interesting but extremely well executed, each providing superb contrast. The finale, Allegro, is also unmistakably Russian. The second theme is memorable for its dance-like quality. A first rate work which belongs in the repertoire. A must for to amateurs players.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor, Op.20 was composed four years later in 1906. Its opening movement, Allegro moderato, is interesting both in the way it is constructed and the development of its themes, the second of which is based on a lovely Russian folk melody. The Andante which follows is very fine quartet writing and highly melodic. It takes Borodin as its point of departure. The third movement is a very Russian-sounding Scherzo, while the finale, marked Orientale, with its exotic melodies evokes the caravansaries and bazaars of Central Asia. Really a superb work. Though lengthy, it performed in concert, it will bring the house down. Again, a fine choice for amateurs.

Twenty two years separate Gliere's **String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.67**, composed in 1927, from String Quartet No.2. They were tremendously important years not only for Gliere, but for the world as well. The First World War, with the outbreak and success of the Russian Revolution in 1917, brought the world Gliere knew to an end. The earlier quartets were written when he was in his early 20's during the time of Imperial Russia. By the time he wrote his Third Quartet, he was past 50 and Russia was under the thumb of Stalin. As one might expect, this work represents a quantum leap from what came before, but one can still hear the relationship to the earlier works. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, begins with a theme which is pleading and melancholy. Immediately, tension begins to build to a powerful climax which releases a forceful torrent of emotion. When things quiet down, a lyrical and romantic melody appears. The second movement, Vivace, begins softly, barely audible in the lower range of the cello. Slowly the rhythmic theme is flushed out into the open. The second theme is simultaneously dramatic and romantic and is then intertwined with the first, then a third Russian-sounding theme is also added. The final two movements are played without pause. A slow movement, Larghetto, comes first. Gliere begins again almost inaudibly. Again, he carefully builds tension to a dramatic climax. A sad and depressed, down-trodden melody of great breadth is then presented. Hearing this, one understands the foundation on which Shostakovich was able to build his technique. The short finale, Fuga, Allegro molto energico, is entirely in the form of a fugue until the explosive coda at the end of the movement. Our sound-bite presents the last part of the fugue and the coda. This is a masterwork from an historically important time. It comes from a period with which we are little familiar. It illustrates how Russian music was developing early in the Soviet era. It belongs in concert and will certainly interest amateurs who are fans of Russian music.

String Quartet No.4 in f minor, Op.83 was composed in 1943. Though it separated by nearly twenty years from No.3, the tonal language is pretty much the same. This is a late Romantic era work. The main theme to the opening movement, Allegro moderato, sounds Russian. Though lyrical, at times, it is mostly edgy and nervous with long frantic quick passages. The second movement, Vivace, is lighter than the preceding movement, but it could not really be described as playful. There is an interesting contrasting trio. Next comes an Andante, which a theme and variations. The theme is quite romantic, but the variations are monotonous. The finale, Allegro, bursts forth with a series of loud chords before descending into a restless, fugue. Slower and romantic interludes provide fine contrast. A good work, suitable for concert but beyond all but the best level of amateur players.



Mikhail Glinka (1804-57) is commonly regarded as the founder of Russian nationalism in music. His influence on composers such as Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin and Mussorgsky was considerable. As a child, he had some lessons from the famous Irish virtuoso pianist John Field who was living in Petersburg, but his association with music remained purely as an amateur, until visits to Europe which began in 1830. In both Italy and Germany, he

was able to formally study and improve his compositional technique. His music offered a synthesis of Western operatic form with Russian melody, while his instrumental music was a combination of the traditional and the exotic. He was the first within Russia to create romances, operas and chamber music on based on Russian themes using Russian folk melodies. Glinka's first musical experience was connected with the orchestra of serf musicians which belonged to his uncle. From 1818 to 1822, he studied in St. Petersburg at a privileged school for children of noblemen. It was during this time, that he had piano lessons with Field and was exposed to the music of Mozart, Cherubini, and Rossini. Glinka subsequently took many trips abroad, the longest from 1830 to 1834 to Italy, Germany, and Austria. During his travels, he made a point of listening to the most famous operas, symphonies and chamber of the day and stored his new impressions for later use. The two major musical influences in his life were Russian folk music and the operas of Donizetti, whom he got know while he was in Italy. He also had the chance to meet both Berlioz and Mendelssohn during his travels.

Glinka began work on his **String Quartet No.1 in D Major** in 1823 at the age of 19. It was more or less completed the following year. However, it was not edited so that it could be played until the 1940's when Nikolai Myaskovsky and Vasily Shirinsky performed this task. It is in four movements. It opens with a an Allegro, written on a grand scale. The music has an undeniably vocal quality to it. The second movement, Larghetto, is a theme and set of three variations. The final variation, which approaches that of a recitativ, is particularly striking. Next comes a classical Menuetto and trio. Haydn seems to have served as his model. The finale, which is where the editors did most of their work, is a classical Rondo. It clearly has its antecedents in the works of Haydn, Mozart and the other classical era Viennese composers, the only ones with whom he would, at this point, have been familiar. Though pleasant with some nice melodies, it must be admitted that this work, which is clearly derivative, is not suitable for concert although it might interest amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in F Major dates from 1829-30, before his first trip abroad to Italy and some 12 years before writing the opera Ruslan and Ludmila. This is important in that one can plainly hear some of the main themes from that famous opera in both the first and last movements of this quartet. The quartet itself is in four movements and written in a light style that seems to combine Italian opera with Mozart. However, the ultimate affect is not derivative but original. Particularly noteworthy for their freshness are the Menuetto and its excellent trio as well as the finale. This work could withstand concert performance as it is one of the earliest examples of a Russian string quartet and, of course, because it is by a composer who influenced an entire generation of Russian composers who came after him. And, it certainly can be recommended to amateurs as it presents no technical problems whatsoever and makes a very good impression.

Benjamin Godard (1849-95) was born in Paris. He studied at the Paris Conservatoire composition with Henri Reber and violin with Henri Vieuxtemps. He was somewhat of a prodigy on that instrument, as well as on the viola, and accompanied Vieuxtemps to Germany on concert tours on two occasions. Godard enjoyed chamber music and played in several performing ensembles. This



experience stood him good stead when it came to writing effective chamber music compositions. In 1878, Godard was the co-winner with Théodore Dubois, head of the Paris Conservatory, of a musical competition instituted by the city of Paris. He composed music with great facility and from 1878 to the time until his death Godard composed a surprisingly large number of works, including the opera *Jocelyn*,

from which the famous "Berceuse" has become perhaps his best known work. He also composed several symphonic works, ballets, concertos, overtures and chamber music, including three string quartets and two piano trios as well as a beautiful and very effective arrangement of Schumann's *Kinderszenen* for string quartet. The only one ever made.

His **String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.33** dates from 1882 and demonstrates the total command of quartet movement technique but also that he knew how to write a good fugue. The spirited, lyrical theme of the energetic first movement, *Allegro*, is highly appealing. The unusually harmonic twists and tonal effects are particularly effective. The second movement, *Andantino*, is a very pleasing theme and set of variations. A short playful pizzicato introduction precedes the charming theme. A short, gorgeous *Andante quasi adagio* is a lovely song without words. The finale consists of a bustling and quite effective *Allegro*. Amateurs will certainly enjoy this richly melodic quartet which is strong enough for the concert hall.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.37 dates from 1884. The appealing thematic material of the first movement, *Allegretto moderato*, shows very fine workmanship. Again, in the second movement, *Andante*, the workmanship is impeccable. This lovely movement resembles an *Albumblatt* (an album leaf or character piece). A short and straight forward *Vivace ma non troppo* comes next. The exciting finale is quite effective because of its rushing rhythmic material and superb workmanship. A good work for concert and also for amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in A Major, Op.136 was composed in 1892. The work opens with a cello solo before the others join in to take part in the serene and quite lyrical *Allegro con moto*. A beautiful and calm *Adagio non troppo* follows, in which the cello is highlighted. The concise third movement, though marked *Minuetto molto moderato*, nonetheless has the feel of a scherzo. The exciting finale, *Allegro con moto*, is full of fire and rhythmic tension. Again, a fine work suitable for the concert stage and home music makers.



Hermann Goetz (1840-1876) Born in Königsburg in East Prussia, he studied with Hans von Bulow, the great Wagner exponent, in Berlin. Goetz, however, though he admired certain works, never became a whole-hearted or uncritical fan of Wagner. Goetz made a name for himself in Berlin and on the strength of this was appointed to succeed Theodor Kirchner as organist at Winterthur's city church and professor at Winterthur's *Musikkollegium*. He gained considerable fame from his opera, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and wrote several chamber works for strings and piano which drew praise from Brahms among others.

His **String Quartet in B Flat Major** was composed in 1866. The opening movement, *Mässig bewegt*, is pedestrian and almost intentionally limp. It is without interest. It might have passed for a slower movement but even here the themes do not seem very memorable—and it is far too long for the meager subject matter. The second movement, *Sehr ausdrucksvoll* is perhaps suitable for background music at a funeral. Though sad and possessing a

certain measure of emotion, it neither captivates nor expresses any real sense of tragedy or loss. Lugubrious is the word which comes to mind. Next we have a Menuet, this is a subdued affair, pleasant but once again not particularly memorable. The trio is a morose and dismal thing hardly worth hearing. The finale, *Mässig rasch*, has all of the same defects of the first movement. It does not grab one's attention and wanders about ineffectively. Given the excellence of his works for piano and strings, this is a real disappointment.



Carl Goldmark (1830-1915) was born in the town of Keszthely in Austria-Hungary. His early musical training was at the conservatories in Sopron and Odenburg. His father then sent him to Vienna where he briefly studied violin under two of the better known teachers, Leopold Jansa and Joseph Böhm. As a composer, however, Goldmark was largely self-taught. World-wide fame came to him with the performance of his opera *The Queen*

of Sheba. He wrote in most genres and many of his other compositions, such as his *Violin Concerto* and the *Rustic Wedding Symphony*, were quite popular during his lifetime and for several years thereafter. His chamber music was well-thought of and also received concert performances while he was alive but disappeared from the concert stage after his death. Goldmark's music shows the influence of Mendelssohn and Schumann often seasoned with lively Hungarian gypsy melodies.

The **String Quartet in B flat Major, Op.8** dates from the mid 1860's. One immediately notices that he was a string player, in this case a violinist, as the parts he writes for all of the voices sound good and are violinistic. The opening movement has a short *Andante* introduction in the minor which expresses unease if not sorrow. The two themes of the main section, *Allegro moderato*, are happier, the first somewhat dreamy and restless, the second is pleasingly sentimental. The second movement, *Andante sostenuto*, is predominantly painted in sweet tonal colors until the more passionate middle section. The third movement, *Allegro vivace*, is a short scherzo, lightly rushing forward. Of particular note is the excellent a section in which the viola continues in 2/4 against the other voices in 3/4. The finale, *Allegro molto*, with its three themes is a fleet affair with a brilliant coda. Suitable for concert and home.



Eugene Goossens (1893-1962) was born in London. He studied violin and composition with Charles Stanford at the Royal Academy of Music. He pursued a career as a conductor and composer. He wrote three works for string quartet.

The first was **Phantasy String Quartet, Op.12** in 1917 for the Cobbett Competition, the terms of which were the work was to be in one movement and no more than 15 minutes. The work is nominally tonal. While there are moments which are attractive and interesting, much of it is hard to make out. The style might be called post Impressionistic. It is in several sections, some highly charged, others rather wandering and wayward. It might be of interest in concert but it cannot be said that it is a pleasing work. It is beyond amateur players.

Roughly at the same time, he composed his **String Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op.14**. As one might expect, it does not sound too different from the *Phantasy Quartet*. It is nominally tonal but the key is meaningless. In three movement, this is basically a harsh work, suggestion that the composer was suffering from gastric disorders at the time he wrote it. This said, there are some riveting episodes and a few attractive lyrical ones, but not enough in my opinion to make this an enjoyable work. Again, this is not

a work for amateurs, but it could be presented in concert as an example of what some young English composers were producing during the second decade of the twentieth century.

His final work for this genre **String Quartet No.2 in C Major, Op.59** dates from 1942. I am not familiar with it, but I am willing to guess that the key has nothing to do with what is actually written, if Quartet No.1 is anything to go by.



Charles Gounod (1818-1893) was born in Paris the son of a talented but unsuccessful painter who died when Gounod was four. His mother, also an artist, kept up his father's classes while also giving music lessons. Gounod displayed a talent in both art and music. He began composing at the age of twelve, and left art in favor of music by the age of thirteen. Entering the Paris Conservatory in 1836, Gounod was highly successful. He won the coveted Prix de Rome three years later and developed a keen interest in that city. He discovered and began a serious study of 16th century sacred music. The beauty of the sacred music prompted Gounod to lifelong religious interests, and he had difficulty deciding between entering the church and continuing with secular music. In 1843, he returned to Paris. Realizing that opera was the only field that led to success for a French composer at that time, he concentrated on that genre and made his operatic debut in 1850. Today he is remembered for his opera *Faust* which appeared in 1856 and had an incredible influence upon French musical thought. There is a reason why chamber music aficionados are unaware of the fact that he composed string quartets. And that is because it was only in the last years of his life, Gounod returned to music of a more intimate nature and composed five string quartets. None were published during his lifetime and the *String Quartet No.3* in a minor was the only one to receive a performance while he was alive. Shortly after his death, it was published as *No.3 Op. Post.* The other four were presumed lost. Nearly 100 years later, in 1993, they were discovered in manuscript form. One was also numbered *No.3*, which created considerable confusion. All five have recently (as of 2019) been recorded. No one knows the chronology of the quartets. Three other quartets were published in the late 20th century.

String Quartet No.1 in C Major known as *Le Petite* is one of these. The opening movement begins with a melancholy, somewhat mysterious sounding *Adagio* introduction which leads to the main section *Allegro*, which is upbeat and light-hearted with some wayward chromaticism. Next comes an *Andante con moto*, which is rather more like an *adagio*. The thematic material is pretty ordinary. The third movement, *Presto*, is a scherzo which sounds like a few mice scurrying around. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, has the quality of a steeple chase, exciting, but the thematic material is somewhat trivial. I would not recommend this quartet for concert, though amateurs might find it fun.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major begins with an *Allegro moderato* which though pleasant is not particularly inspired. The second movement, *Allegretto*, opens in funereal fashion. The beating pizzicato accompaniment gives the music a march-like quality, but it is a subdued march to be sure. This is a standout movement, ghostly and memorable. An *Allegro* follows which is a light cross between an *intermezzo* and a *scherzo*. Pleasant enough but not really very gripping. The finale, *Allegro moderato*, has a short introduction which seems to have nothing to do with the bright, bustling upbeat main section. This is an appealing movement, certainly French in its inspiration. The quartet is uneven in quality, perhaps it could be brought to concert and can definitely be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in a minor, Op. Post. is as noted the only quartet performed during his lifetime and published shortly thereafter. The first movement, *Allegro*, begins with a very pow-

erful series of outbursts, a la Beethoven. This is followed up by a fugue which then leads to a more lyrical second theme. The highly atmospheric *Allegretto quasi moderato*, creates an indelible impression. The muted strings and pizzicato give the music a perfumed and exotic quality. This is followed by a bright and airy *Scherzo*. According to Gounod, the main theme of the finale, *Allegretto*, was suggested to him by his two year old grandson. The music is playful, buoyant and has a child-like innocence to it. This quartet makes no pretenses at profundity or at plumbing the depths of emotion, yet it is very appealing, full of Gallic wit and charm, and fun to play and good enough to be heard in concert.

String Quartet No.3 in F Major was published much later and it is not clear why it has the same number. The opening movement has a *Largo* introduction, the main section *Allegro moderato* is genial but somewhat limpid. Next is a muscular, but tedious *Scherzo*. Third is an *Andante con moto*. It does not begin very promisingly, but the main theme is rather good and the whole is well done. Gounod inserts a second *Scherzo* to serve as a fourth movement. Ordinary, not bad, but not very memorable and hard to see why he felt the need to insert it altogether. The fifth and final movement, *Allegretto*, once again is well written but the thematic material is not particularly inspired. Not a candidate for concert, although amateurs might like it. I am not familiar with the other quartet. To sum up, all of these quartets sound rather similar, and the defect which affects virtually all of them except *No.3* in a minor, *Op. Post.* is that the thematic material though pleasant, just does not have a memorable quality. Toward the end of Gounod's life, Saint Saëns visited him and asked him what he had been writing. When Gounod answered that he had been writing quartets, Saint Saëns asked to see them but Gounod refused him saying, 'They are bad.' With respect to three of the four I have reviewed, he was not entirely wrong. However, it seems to me that there was a reason why Gounod allowed *No.3* in a minor to be publicly performed and that is because it suffers from none of the defects of the others.



Théodore Gouvy (1819-1898) was born into a French speaking family in the Alsatian village of Goffontaine which at the time belonged to Prussia. As a child, he showed no significant talent for music and after a normal preparatory education was sent to Paris in 1836 to study law. While there, he also continued piano lessons and became friendly with Adolphe Adam. This led to further music studies in Paris and Berlin.

Gouvy, drawn toward pure instrumental music as opposed to opera, set himself the unenviable task of becoming a French symphonist. It was unenviable because the French, and especially the Parisians, throughout most of the 19th century were opera-mad and not particularly interested in pure instrumental music. It was this distain for instrumental music in general which led to Gouvy living the last third of his life almost entirely in Germany where he was much appreciated. During his lifetime, his compositions, and especially his chamber music, were held in high regard and often performed in those countries (Germany, Austria, England, Scandinavia & Russia) where chamber music mattered. But in France, he never achieved real acclaim. Gouvy was universally acknowledged for being a master of form and for his deft sense of instrumental timbre. Mendelssohn and Schumann were his models and his music developed along the lines one might have expected of those men had they lived longer. Virtually all of his works show that he was a gifted melodist whose music is a joy to hear. That he and his music were held in high regard but nonetheless failed to achieve great fame is surely in part due to the fact that he was a man of some means who was not forced to earn his living from music. There has always been a bias against those who had the freedom to live for their art but did not need to live by it. Many jealous second-raters held this against him; the most

notable being Fetis, a third rate composer who was nonetheless perhaps the most influential 19th century music critic. By contrast, musicians of the first rank such as Brahms, Reinecke and Joachim, who were familiar with Gouvy's music, held it in high regard. He may have written as many as eleven string quartets, but only five have ever been published.

The first two appeared in 1857 as his Op.16, but composed a few years before this. **String Quartet No.1 in B flat Major, Op.16 No.1** is an example of his mastery of true quartet technique. It builds on the style of Mozart and early Beethoven. In the first movement, Allegro, one finds unexpected and pleasing ideas which he puts to good use but never to exhaustion. While the accompaniment is pretty simple and perhaps old fashioned for the time, the melodic material truly makes up for this. The second movement, a bracing Allegretto is in the style of a serenade. This is followed by a charming, muted Larghetto. The finale, Presto, is dominated by great forward motion in all of the voices which ultimately builds to a powerful conclusion. Probably not a work for the concert stage, but highly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major, Op.16 No.2 begins with an Allegro in the same fashion as No.1, though the style is perhaps less quartet like although the melodies are pleasing. The middle movement Andantino, scherzando serves as two movements in one. The scherzando part is particularly fine. The finale is good but more suited to a string orchestra.

String Quartet No.3 in D Major, Op.56 No.1 dates from 1872 and was the first of a set of two that were published the following year. The opening movement Allegro non troppo begins with an attractive and deeply felt main subject which followed by a fetching ländler subject. The use of rhythm is particularly clever and really makes the movement stand out. The second movement, Scherzo, allegro, is a superb elvish dance of the sort Mendelssohn often wrote. Next comes a Larghetto con moto which uses a Swedish folk tune as its theme for a set of fine variations. The finale, Vivace, recalls the rhythms and motives of the earlier movements but not entirely successfully and is a let down from the previous three movements. But all in all, this is certainly a work which will give pleasure to home music makers. I am not familiar with String Quartet No.4 Op.56 No.2.

String Quartet No.5 in e minor, Op.68 is his last published quartet, composed in the 1870's and published the following decade. The first movement, Allegro con brio, begins in dramatic fashion and mixes heightened excitement with several beautiful but more relaxed episodes. The second movement, Allegretto moderato, is a moody cross between a minuet and a scherzo. The following Andante con moto is a theme and set of variations. In the solemn finale, Allegro agitato, Gouvy, builds to an exciting and effective climax phrase by phrase. Though not a great work, it is a good work though perhaps not meriting a concert performance, but amateurs will be pleased by it.



Carl Grädener (1812-1883) often appearing as C.G.P. Graedener, was born in the German city of Rostok. He began his career as cellist in a string quartet for a decade before working as a conservatory director in a number of places in north Germany. He composed at least string quartets during the early 1860s. Most sources say in 1861. I am unfamiliar with his first two string quartets, Op.12 and Op.17.

String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major, Op.29 also dates from 1861. The opening movement has a Lento molto introduction which leaves no impression whatsoever. The main section, Allegro di molto, is threadbare, repetitive and says nothing of import. The second movement, Largo molto, is somewhat of an improvement. Clearly meant to express deep feeling, unfortunately the themes are not very memorable and really have wandering quality. The Scherzo molto allegro which follows opens with a whirl-

ing theme is might be effective if it was not so difficult technically to pull off and at anything less than a very fast tempo loses what verve it has. There is an exotic interlude which does not exactly go with what came before but interesting. The finale, Lento, allegro vivace, is a failure. The thematic material is poor. It sounds like a rather poor student work. Need I say more.



Hermann Grädener (1844-1929) was born in the northern German city of Kiel. His father Karl was also a composer and teacher. In 1862, Hermann entered the Vienna Conservatory where he studied composition and violin. He worked for a number of years as a violinist in the Court Orchestra and gained a reputation as a respected composer and teacher, eventually holding a professorship at the Vienna Conservatory. He also served for a number of years as the director of the famed Vienna Singakademie. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.33 dates from 1898. The main theme of the opening Allegro con brio is full of character and well executed. Dominated by its strong rhythm, it borders on being tedious. The second movement, Adagio non troppo, subtitled 'To be played as a ballad' leaves a strong impression with its deep feeling and rich tonalities. A jovial Scherzo, allegro molto, follows. It has two captivating waltz-like themes. The finale, Rondo, is full of magnificent melodies and tonalities and is capped off by a long exciting coda. This is a work which keeps getting better and better as it goes along so that by the time you have finished playing or hearing it, you are convinced this is a good quartet. It is strong enough for concert and certainly can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.39 dates from 1905. The main theme of the first movement, Non troppo allegro, risoluto ed energico, has a somewhat wandering set of themes which are not particularly memorable or convincing. The appealing main theme of the second movement, Andante, creates a fine impression and the movement is a considerable improvement over the first movement although at times somewhat lugubrious. A charming scherzo, Allegro molto leggiero, is tricky to pull off. The trio section is pleasing. The finale, Allegro energico ed un poco agitato, is dominated by its rhythm but has an appealing and lilting main theme. Overall, a decent work, probably not a candidate for the concert hall but it can be recommended to amateurs.



Paul Graener (1872-1944) served as director of the Theatre Royal Haymarket in London from 1898-1906, taught at the New Vienna Conservatory from 1911-1913, was appointed Director of the Mozarteum in Salzburg in 1914, succeeded Max Reger as Professor of Composition at the Leipzig Conservatory and then served as director of the Stern Conservatory in Berlin from 1934. Graener was a prolific composer and during the 1920's and 30's his works, especially his operas, were frequently performed. He wrote four string Quartets.

String Quartet in f minor, Op.33, subtitled "Quartet on a Swedish Folksong" came out in 1910. The folksong is *Spin, spin dear little daughter*. Not a particularly easy work to play, it requires performers who are secure in both their intonation and rhythmic abilities. The first movement, Andante, is short and beautiful if played with exact intonation which sounds easier than it is. The second movement, Allegro moderato, is full of time signature changes as well as changes of mood with considerable unrest. This is because the song relates how a mother begs her daughter to spin some cloth and tells that on the morrow her suitor will come for her. This makes the girl excited. But the suitor

never comes. In the third movement, *Allegro*, the restless mood of expectation becomes greater yet. But as the suitor never comes, the daughter is saddened and the final movement is an *Elegie*, *adagio*, beautiful but a long series of difficult arpeggios in the cello makes it a very difficult to pull off. Certainly could be brought to concert but as for amateurs, they need to be almost of professional standard.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op.54 appeared in 1920 and is in three short movements. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, is in the form of a *Siciliano* and is quite atmospheric, very free in tempo and construction and not traditionally tonal but not atonal either. Not particularly easy. The second movement is a wild and stormy *scherzo*, *Vivace* with a contrasting trio section. Here the tonality is more traditional. The finale, begins with a subdued *Adagio*, somewhat elegaic. It leads to a *Allegro marcato*, which starts off with a pounding rhythm but devolves into a softer, searching section, reflective, but not cohesive. I cannot recommend it for concert performance and am not sure how enjoyable amateurs will find it.

String Quartet No.3, Op.65 is a two movement affair which was composed in 1924. The first, *Leidenschaftlich bewegt*, is fiery though not exactly tonal nor atonal. The second movement, *Adagio (Mit grösster innigkeit) - Andante - Molto allegro - Andante quasi più Adagio - Allegretto scherzando - Larghetto - Allegretto - Allegro energetico*, basically combines a slow movement, a *scherzo* and a finale all in one. This is a very original and interesting movement. Challenging but it makes a strong impression. Perhaps not everyone's cup of tea, but it is a candidate for the concert hall. The only amateurs that might make sense of it will have to be of professional caliber. I am unfamiliar with his *String Quartet No.4, Op.80* from 1928.



Moscow born **Alexander Gretchaninov** (1864-1956) started his musical studies rather late because his father, a businessman, had expected the boy to take over the family firm. Gretchaninov himself related that he did not see a piano until he was 14 and began his studies at the Moscow Conservatory in 1881 against his parents' wishes and without their knowledge. His main teachers there were Arensky and Sergei Taneyev. In the late

1880s, he moved to St. Petersburg where he studied composition and orchestration with Rimsky-Korsakov until 1893. Rimsky's influence can be heard in Gretchaninov's early works, such as his *String Quartet No.1*, a prize-winning composition. Around 1896, Gretchaninov returned to Moscow and was involved with writing for the theater, the opera, and the Russian Orthodox Church. By 1910, he was considered a composer of such distinction that the Tsar had awarded him an annual pension. Though he remained in Russia for several years after the Revolution, ultimately, he chose to emigrate, first to France in 1925 and then to the United States in 1939 where he remained for the rest of his life.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.2 was completed some months after Gretchaninov finished his studies at the Petersburg Conservatory. It was entered in the competition of 1894 where it won first prize with the result that it was published both in Russia and Germany. The first movement *Andante, allegro non troppo* begins with a slow and highly romantic brief introduction which quickly builds to a climax and then gives way to the main movement, overflowing with attractive melodies. These gorgeous melodies, of folk origin, are surely part of the reason this quartet took the top prize. The extraordinarily beautiful second movement, *Andante*, again takes traditional Russian folk music for its inspiration. The vocal quality of the music is very apparent and is of the highest quality. Next comes a *scherzo*, *Presto*, full of high spirits. The finale, *Andante, molto vivace e con brio*, begins pensively in a somewhat sad vein but quickly

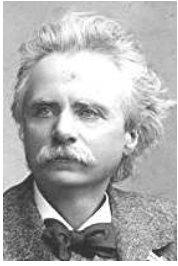
dissolves into the highly accented and rhythmically pulsing first theme of the main movement. The lyrical second theme provides a wonderful contrast. This is a superb quartet which belongs in the repertoire but will pose no difficulties for amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in d minor, Op.70 dates from 1913. It, too, won a prize but is an entirely different work both in mood and tonality. As one contemporary critic put it, "*It would be hard to ascribe the two quartets to the same composer.*" While the First shows the influence of Rimsky Korsakov and to a lesser extent Tchaikovsky, the Second is a kind of synthesis of Sergei Taneyev, Scriabin and the French impressionists, but it really sounds like none of them. The opening movement, *Andante, allegro non troppo*, begins with a moody, brooding introduction which only slowly picks up in tempo and never really becomes fast. It is a searching movement, the music gives the impression of approaching new frontiers, but remains conventionally tonal. The lively, captivating *Scherzo* which follows is a masterly example of polytonality and counterpoint. We can hear the beginnings of the neo-romantic movement here. Next comes a *Largo* in which the tonalities are more conservative. There is an extraordinarily attractive fugue in the middle. In the wonderful finale, a bright *Allegro*, both the mood and melodies are the closest to his old style but there are also forward-looking moments as well. Another first rate work recommended to pros and amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in c minor, Op.75 was composed in 1916, at the height of the First World War just as things began going very poorly for the Russians. Certainly one can imagine strife and struggle very clearly in the highly dramatic opening movement, *Lento, allegro moderato*. The music is very chromatic and develops as a tense conversation between the voices. Here Gretchaninov has distanced himself entirely from the influence of the French impressionists and, to a lesser degree, from the Russian Nationalist School with its insistence on the use of Russian folk melody. Instead, we hear the tonalities of Central European late romanticism. The second movement, *Lento assai*, is a theme and set of variations. The theme, *Espressivo, amoroso* is languid. One of the middle variations is a terse fugue with echoes of Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*. It is only in the fast, pulsing *Scherzo*, which comes next, that an overtly Russian theme, framed in the manner of Korsakov is heard. In the middle, a march follows a fanfare. The big, exuberant finale, *Allegro vivace*, sounds rather like music for a festival, as Glazunov might have conceived it., but executed far more effectively. Although this quartet breaks no new ground, it is a first class work.

String Quartet No.4 in F Major, Op.124 dates from 1929 and is the only one composed when he was no longer living in Tsarist Russia. He had resided in Paris for four years at the time he wrote it, yet there is no sign of French impressionism. Rather, we hear the music of his native Russia and of his earlier exemplars with tinges of the Viennese classics. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins with an inversion of the famous main theme to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The second and more lyrical subject also comes from the same movement of Beethoven's symphony and its rhythmic character pervades the entire movement as it does in Beethoven's. The second movement, *Maestoso assai*, is closely related to the themes of the preceding *Allegro*. Its emotional temperature slowly rises to a dramatic climax by virtue of its persistent and repeated rhythms, before dissolving into a softer and poetic denouement. The *Allegro vivo* serves as a nervous *scherzo*, however, a counter melody belted out by the cello is a belligerent Russian folk tune. The constant alternation between *pizzicato* and bowed passages creates an original sounding and strong impression, while the trio section conjures up the images of folk fiddlers. The finale, *Lento ma non troppo, Vivo*, begins with a slow introduction that has a five note theme which is repeated at ever increasing speed until it morphs seamlessly into the main section *Vivo*. It is only here that it seems Gretchaninov has assimilated more modern developments.

The music is upbeat and sunny, but with heavily accented irregular rhythmic passages and momentary dissonances, a la Bartok, which give the work a more modern flavor. Another fine work suitable for the concert hall or home.



Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) was born in the Norwegian city of Bergen. He is Norway's best known composer and one of the best known from the Romantic era. He studied piano with his mother before attending the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied piano with Ignaz Moscheles and composition with Carl Reinecke. He pursued a career as a concert pianist and composer and his compositions for orchestra and his piano concerto have achieved worldwide

fame. He did not write a great deal of chamber music—only one completed string quartet and several instrumental sonatas—which may be why these works are not better known.

His **String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.27** was completed in 1877. The massive first movement, *Un poco andante*—Allegro molto ed agitato, begins with a thematic motto that Grieg uses throughout the Quartet. It is from his song *Spillemænd* (wandering fiddlers or minstrels) the words to which were by Ibsen. The substance of this song probably has some relevance to the music (as Schubert's song *Death & the Maiden* did to his quartet). In the song, the Norse water sprite Hulder lures the wandering musicians to his waterfall with promises to teach them the secrets of the art of music. Although he reveals these secrets, Hulder also takes from the musicians their happiness and peace of mind. The music begins with a slow introduction that gives way to a richly orchestrated fast section. Grieg achieves tremendous power through the use of intense dynamics, sforzandos, and brusque march-like interludes rather than through traditional thematic development. The *Spillemænd* motto is the second theme in the Allegro. A slow movement, *Romanze: Andantino*—Allegro agitato, comes next. This certainly is the most private and intimate of the four movements. It begins with a gentle, lyrical section, which is, as the title indicates, a kind of love song. But Grieg interrupts the beautiful, somewhat lazy tranquility of this music with several violent, agitated episodes. These provide great contrast, not only because of the nervous tension, but also because the music is faster. Grieg clearly was taken by the effect and repeats it in different keys before concluding this fine movement. Having had his music attacked by German critics as well as Niels Gade, the famous Danish composer, as being too nationalistic, Grieg was concerned with the issue of nationalism versus universality in music. However just like Dvorak, he was unable to do without the music of his homeland, and it permeates his writing even though he promised he "would not strive after the national." In the *Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato*, the music is unmistakably Norwegian. The main section has a vigorous theme in the minor while the trio provides a rollicking interlude in major. The *Finale*—Lento: Presto al saltarello begins slowly with a statement of the *Spillemænd* motto in cascading imitation by each voice. Then in violent contrast, a demonic and furiously paced *Saltarello* bursts forth at breathtaking speed. The excitement is palpable. Just before the end of this thrilling movement, there is a final and emphatic restatement of the *Spillemænd* motto played fortissimo before the first violin races to the finish over the double-stopped accompaniment of the other three voices. This is a masterwork. It is only very occasionally programmed outside of Norway, but it is a crowd pleaser and can be managed without much difficulty by most amateur groups.

He started a second string quartet, the so called **String Quartet No.2 in F Major**, was begun in 1891. After struggling with it for over a decade, he had only completed two movements before his death. It weighed on his mind and he wrote to his publisher shortly before his death that it was hanging around like an old

Norwegian cheese, but that he hoped to complete it after all. He did not get the chance. It begins with a few loud chords before descending into a restless Allegro. It is charming and pleasant but lacks the drama of the first quartet. Grieg recognized this and noted that he was trying to write a different kind of work. In this he succeeded to the extent that there is no hint of the music of Norway. This movement could have been written by any central European composer. The following *Allegro Scherzando* is ghostly and quite effective, a kind of elves dance. The trio section is a rustic Norse dance. The quartet was published after his death. Several composers have completed it based on sketches which Grieg left behind. The best, by consensus was that by Julius Röntgen. It could be given in concert where a shorter work is required and can be recommended to amateurs.



Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884-1920) was born in the Elmira, New York. He had piano lessons with Mary Broughton, who taught at Elmira College. She encouraged him to study in Berlin and arranged for him to attend the Stern Conservatory where he continued his piano studies, while subsequently studying composition privately with Engelbert Humperdinck. On returning to the U.S. in 1907, he became director of music studies at the Hack-

ley School for boys in Tarrytown, New York, a post which he held until his death. The post gave him ample time to compose. His initial works are influenced by German Romanticism, but he subsequently abandoned the German style for Impressionism and he is regarded as perhaps the most important American composer of this style. He was fascinated by the exotic, mysterious sound of the French Impressionists which plays an important role in many of his later works.

His **Two Sketches on Indian Themes** for String Quartet were actually only two of five he wrote between the years of 1908 and 1919. One was written during his early "German" period, and the others were written during the time in which he was experimenting with different types of composition and sounds, including those from other cultures. The reason the sketches are dubbed, "Two Sketches..." is because after Griffes' death in 1920, his publisher Schirmer chose two of the five sketches to publish, and never published the others. And the second sketch which they published, *Allegro giocoso*, wasn't even one of his sketches but from an earlier work for string quartet which Griffes included among his other drafts. On the manuscript to the first sketch, Griffes wrote that the theme was based on a Chippawa Indian farewell song. We do not know what if any Indian theme the second sketch used as nothing was written on the manuscript. This interesting and atmospheric work by an important American composer deserves concert performance

Although the chamber music of **Franz Grill** (1756-1792) was well-known and was published in Vienna, Paris, Naples, Oslo, Berlin, Uppsala, Dresden and Munich giving some idea of its popularity, almost nothing is known about his life such as where he was born or studied or worked. There are three sets of string quartets, Op.3 a set of three, Op.5 three more, and Op.7 a set of six. I am only familiar with the Op.7. Although Grill was almost an exact contemporary of Mozart, Grill's **Op.7 String Quartets** show no familiarity with the advances made by either Mozart or Haydn. All six works are quartetti concertante, that is, each voice is given solo passages to what is usually a simple accompaniment. Still, these works show the touch of a gifted melodist and also have interesting rhythmic flourishes. It is on the strength of the melodic writing along with these small original touches, reminiscent of the Wranitzky brothers for whom Grill briefly worked, that make these works worth revisiting. They are even strong enough to be programmed in concert by those groups looking for

early works from the Viennese classical era and they are certainly far preferable to hearing arrangements of music never intended for string quartet, such as that from Purcell, Pachelbel and Bach which some professional quartets have taken to fobbing off on their audiences.



Leo Grill (1846-1919) was born in Budapest. He studied composition at the Royal Bavarian Conservatory with Franz Lachner and subsequently pursued a career as a composer and teacher, eventually becoming a professor of composition at the Leipzig Conservatory where he taught for thirty years. Among his many students was Leos Janacek. He composed in most genres and has two string quartets to his credit. His music shows

the influence of Schumann and Mendelssohn as well as that of his own teacher.

String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major, Op.9 was published in 1875. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, begins with a beautiful cantilena melody and is followed up by an appealing lyrical second subject. Next comes an Andante con moto quasi allegretto the main section which is in the form of a simple, lovely song and is set off by a dramatic, restless middle section. The third movement, Allegro, is a melodically appealing scherzo with contrasting trio. The finale, Allegro molto vivace, is a fiery tarantella. This is a first rate work good for concert and for home.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op.11 came in 1887. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, is filled with attractive and memorable themes. This is followed by an Andante, which is a theme and eleven variations. The theme is simple and nice but not all of the variations are successful and there are just too many. The movement would be more effective if several were cut. Next comes a charming scherzo with a rather ordinary trio section presto. The finale, Allegro non troppo, ma con fuoco, is Hungarian sounding and is a virtuoso showpiece. A solid work but not really a candidate for concert.



The Prussian cellist **Johann Benjamin Gross** (1809-1848) and his music are virtually unknown and his name no longer appears in the standard reference sources. However, during his lifetime, he was well-known and frequently performed with Mendelssohn and the Schumanns. Born in the East Prussian town of Elbing, by the mid-1830's, he was already serving as solo cellist in Berlin and later in Leipzig.

Most of his works were for the cello or voice, but he also wrote four string quartets. I am only familiar with his **String Quartet No.3 in f minor, Op.37** was composed in 1843. The first movement is a very Mendelssohnian Allegro di molto, complete with a dramatic recitative for the first violin, which recalls Mendelssohn's Op.13. The main theme of the relatively short second movement, Cavatina, is somewhat subdued and stately. The third movement, marked Alternativo, begins in canonic fashion and is a scherzo which at times seems Beethovenian. The finale, Allegro con passione, opens with several explosive chords before a tragic, Mendelssohnian main theme is introduced. The music is propelled by a thrusting forward drive. A surprisingly good work despite some strong Mendelssohnian influence. Recommended

Friedrich Grützmacher (1832-1903) was one of the leading cellists of the last part of the 19th century. He was discovered by the famous violinist Ferdinand David and played in a quartet with him. He concertized throughout Europe and taught many of the most famous cellists who came after him. Most of his works are for the cello, although he did write one string quartet.

His **String Quartet in e minor, Op.15**, which came out in



1855. In four movements, Allegro affetuoso, Adagio cantabile, Scherzo allegretto and Allegro con fuoco. The part writing and style are good as you might expect from an experienced quartet player. It has appealing melodies and plays pretty well although there are several tricky, but not virtuosic, passages for the cellist. Not a candidate for concert but one which amateurs will enjoy.



Jesus Guridi (1886-1961) was born in the Spanish city of Vitoria of Basque parents, both of whom were musicians. He studied piano and violin in Madrid and Balboa and composition with Joseph Jongen in Brussels. He works as a teacher, conductor and organist. Influenced by Wagner, he integrated this with the music of his Basque homeland. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major dates from 1934. The opening Allegro is a light, somewhat melodious and with folk-elements but a bit vacuous. It is infused with the air of the French impressionists, in particular Ravel. textures. The dance like second movement, Vivace, is a skipping dance, once again, it sounds more French than Spanish or Basque. Next comes an Adagio non troppo lento. It is sad, almost elegaic and well done. The finale, Allegro, is a kind of French impressionist gigue, playful and carefree. Perhaps it could be brought into concert and for amateurs experienced in this idiom.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor was completed in 1949. The opening energetic Allegro moderato is better put together than any of the movements in No.1. It is possible to follow the thematic material without straining. The second movement, Adagio sostenuto, has a depressed, down-trodden mood, as if you had walked into a house where someone had recently died. This said it is quite effective in what it sets out to do. A whirling scherzo like Prestissimo comes next. A good movement. The finale, Vivace non troppo, begins with a series of heavy chords which serves as the main theme. After a lugubrious beginning, things get more exciting. In my opinion this is an altogether better work than No.1. It is more approachable and it does not require any detailed concentration to try and follow what is going on. It could be brought into the concert hall and can be recommended to experienced amateur players.



To paraphrase the well-known music critic Bruce Lamott, **Adalbert Gyrowetz** (1763-1850) was the "Zelig" of music history. Like the lead character of Woody Allen's movie Zelig, Gyrowetz was everywhere and knew everyone worth knowing. He was born in the Bohemian town Budweis, then part of the Austrian Habsburg empire and today known as Budějovice in the Czech Republic. He is sometimes, though not often, known by the Czech form of his name Vojtěch Jírovec. He studied violin and voice with his father, a choirmaster. Gyrowetz traveled throughout Europe, residing for periods in Vienna, Paris, London, Rome, Naples and several other major European cities. Among his friends and acquaintances were Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Goethe and Napoleon to name but a few. His style closely resembles that of Haydn and several of his symphonies were published under Haydn's name by unscrupulous publishers trying to make an extra buck. Mozart thought enough of Gyrowetz's symphonies to perform several of them at concerts in Vienna. Gyrowetz, like most of his contemporaries, was a prolific composer writing some 400 works, among them 60 symphonies, and hundreds of chamber works including approximately 60 string

quartets. While today, he has been forgotten and his music consigned to oblivion, this was not always the case. A close friend of both Haydn and Beethoven—he was a pallbearer at Ludwig's funeral—his music was held in respect and frequently performed on the same programs with theirs throughout Europe and even in North America. Not only a musician, 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. 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 although 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. In evaluating his string quartets, it is important to keep in mind that virtually all of them were composed before 1810, most before 1800. In his memoirs, Gyrowetz wrote that it was a peculiar feeling to remain alive, in the 1840s and realize that one is already reputation-wise dead. He was referring to the fact that his music, once highly praised, had fallen into oblivion within his own lifetime. I do not pretend to know most of his 60 string quartets, nor would space allow them all to be discussed. But I am familiar with a few. I have played all of the ones listed below and several have been commercially recorded including Opp.13,21, 29, 42 and 44.

String Quartet in B flat Major, Op.1 No.3 is the third of a set of six he composed while living in Rome and working for Prince Alessandro Ruspoli. It dates from the mid-late 1780s. As the opus number suggests, this is a very early work. Interestingly, on the first edition of the title page, the publisher Janet et Cotelle states "*élève de Haydn*", i.e. pupil of Haydn. Neither Gyrowetz in his detailed autobiography nor any other source lists him as having studied with Haydn, although it is not impossible and the two were very good friends. If anything, it may mean in the spirit of Haydn. Interestingly, the quartet is only in three movements, fast-slow-fast with no minuet, following the practice of the Mannheim School of Stamitz, rather than in four movements, which was the format pioneered by Haydn and Mozart around 1780. But this innovation did take a while to catch on and it was not adopted by other leading composers in Vienna such as the Wranitzky and Franz Krommer until around 1800. The Quartet begins with a Haydnesque Allegro moderato, of the type Haydn was composing in the 1770s. However, there are certain differences that Haydn did not generally employ such as the use of pizzicato in fast movements. In the middle is a singing Adagio cantabile. The finale, a lively tuneful Allegro is simply marked Rondo. This quartet is not only important because it sheds light on how he would develop but also on its own because it is pleasing to play and hear. A fine substitute for an early Haydn work in concert.

String Quartet in D Major, Op.13 No.1 is the first of a set of three dating from 1796. Like several of his contemporaries such as Boccherini and Pleyel, his works were quite popular in his day and were published by different publishers in different countries and were often given different opus numbers. For example, these quartets were originally published by the famous firm of Artaria in Vienna as his Op.13. However, when Pleyel published them in Paris, he gave them the opus number of 25. Several other firms in England and Germany also got into the act This in and of itself is an indication of the high regard in which they held. The opening movement marked Allegro begins with a rather pretty, genial Haydnesque tune. However, not long thereafter, a section reminiscent of a Mozartean opera overture takes over. The two are interspersed with great expertise. Each of the voices are given a chance to shine. The second movement is actually two movements in one. It begins and ends with a dreamy Larghetto after which a lyrical but somewhat operatic section leads to a lively

Allegretto. The Larghetto then reappears to end the movement. The finale, Allegretto, has a march-like quality because of its rhythm and the way it is accented. A smoother section follows before the march reappears at a faster tempo adding considerable excitement. This quartet is not only historically important because it sheds light on what other then important composers were doing at the time in Vienna (Beethoven had yet to write a quartet, Haydn was writing his Op.74) but also because it is pleasing to play and hear. And it is especially noteworthy in that many elements found here appear shortly thereafter in Beethoven's Op.18 quartets. Surely this is no accident and something for which Gyrowetz has not been given the credit he deserves.

String Quartet in D Major, Op.21 No.3 is the last of a series of three dating from 1798. The opus 21 quartets were also published as Op.47 but his actual Op.47 was a set of symphonies. The quartet begins with a powerful Allegro full of energy and approaching the orchestral in sound quality. Next comes a beautiful, singing Adagio. Then comes a lively Menuetto, an Allegro with nicely contrasting trio. Too fast to dance to, it is nonetheless quite appealing. The finale, Allegretto, showcases Gyrowetz's gift for charming melody. It should be noted that all of the voices, and not just the first violin, are generously treated and even given challenging episodes. It would make a fine concert choice as substitute for a Haydn work. Recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet in E flat Major, Op.29 No.1 is the first of a set of three dating from 1799. These quartets were originally published in Vienna as Op.29. Later a Parisian firm republished them as Op. 42. To add to this confusion, yet another firm, this one in Augsburg Germany published a different set of quartets which they numbered as his Op.42. The opening movement marked Allegro con spirito begins rather surprisingly sotto voce and is not exactly spirited. However, not long thereafter it explodes in rousing fashion with each voice given a chance to shine. The second movement, Andantino, poco adagio is played muted and has a choral quality. Next comes a haunting Minuetto, allegretto, not at all the sort of minuet one would dance to but more in the nature of a very lively scherzo. The contrasting trio section begins rather laxly but is interrupted by fairy-dance bursts. The finale, Allegretto, is a bright, jovial Haydnesque affair. Once again, one finds elements in this quartet which his friend Beethoven incorporated in his Op.18 quartets. Surely this was no accident. Ought to be brought into the concert hall and played by amateurs.

String Quartet in G Major, Op.29 No.2 was the second of the set from 1799. The opening Allegro moderato begins rather like Haydn's Op.76 No.4 *The Sunrise* not that it sounds the same but that it gives the feeling of the morning beginning. It is an engaging movement full of surprises and exciting passages. The lovely second movement, Adagio con moto begins as a sad and melancholy affair, soon there are storm-like bursts before the music returns to its original mood, later the tempo picks up and the Adagio seems very distant. Third is a very Haydnesque Menuetto allegro with a 'Trio rovescio'—in reverse, very original. The finale, a fetching Allegro. This quartet is every bit as Haydn's Op.76 No.4, and in some ways better. An excellent concert choice and recommended to amateur quartetters.

In 1802, the German publisher Gombert of Augsburg brought out three quartets of Gyrowetz and titled them Op.42. It surprised me that these three quartets were chosen to be commercially recorded for they are not, in my opinion, among his best. The first one, **String Quartet in F Major, Op.42 No.1** only has three movements. It begins with an Allegro moderato full of action and at times exciting but thin on memorable melodic material. The middle movement is a workman-like Adagio but there is nothing memorable about it. The finale, Allegretto, is step above the preceding two movements but not enough to warrant its revival in concert although amateurs might find it enjoyable.

The lengthy opening movement to **String Quartet in D Major, Op.42 No.2** is way too long and entirely forgettable. Gyro-

wetz must have penned it on a day when he had nothing to say. The second movement, Adagio, is somewhat better and has operatic touches. Perhaps he was working on one of his many operas at the time. Third us a nicely written Menuetto allegro assai. Much better than the preceding two movements. The finale, Allegretto, has several original touches but this it cannot be said to be particularly inspired. Give this one a miss.

String Quartet in c minor, Op.42 No.3 is also in three movements. It begins with a compelling dark, ominous Allegro moderato. However, this effect is quickly squandered by a bunch of trivial running passages of no significance. The Andante which comes next begins promisingly as a serenade, but again it is interrupted by a number of quicker passages which detract rather than add anything. The finale, Allegro assai, is okay but nothing special. This does not deserve revival and it was a waste to have recorded it commercially when there are so many better quartets of his waiting to receive such a chance. In my opinion, these quartets were composed a good 20 years before they were published by Gombert. If they were the only quartets we knew, one might conclude that Gyrowetz was also a second rate composer. But this is *not true*.

The three String Quartets, **Op.44 Nos.1-3** date from 1804 and as such are late quartets for Gyrowetz, but they predate Beethoven's Op.18. They are on a par with Haydn's middle period and, in my opinion, for the most part not on a par with earlier works such as his Op.29.

Op.44 No.1 in G Major is in four movements. The opening Allegro is choc-a bloc full of running passages but is not particularly gripping. The Adagio which comes next is not particularly inspired. The Menuetto is in no way memorable. The finale Presto is okay. I see no reason to revive this work.

Op.44 No.2 in B Flat only has three movements, an Allegro moderato is full of running passages which detract from the appealing melodies. A somber Adagio non tanto follows. The finale, Allegretto, which has a cheeky, fetching main theme. This quartet can be recommended to amateurs but not for concert.

Op.44 No.3 in A Flat Major begins with an engaging Allegretto moderato. A lyrical, singing Adagio is second. There is an ordinary Menuetto with an excellent trio which provides a fine contrast. The concluding movement Allegro is well done. This quartet is strong enough to be brought into the concert hall and it can be warmly recommended to amateurs..



Joseph Haas (1879-1960) was born in the Bavarian town of Mailingen. Although he trained and worked as a school teacher, he wanted a career in music, and eventually took private lessons from Max Reger, then later at the Leipzig Conservatory. His success as a composer led to his becoming a professor at the Stuttgart Conservatory and then later in Munich. Among his many students were Eugen Jochum, Wolfgang

Sawallisch, Karl Höller and Karl Amadeus Hartmann. Haas, like Reger, never abandoned tonality and many of his works are richly tonal though in an updated way. Haas wrote in most genres and left a number of chamber music works, including two string quartets. The String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.8 seems to have disappeared and I have been unable to learn anything about it.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.50 was published in 1919. The main theme of the opening movement, Frisch und lebendig (fresh and lively) first brought forth by the viola is indeed memorable. The entire movement is charming and the writing is of the highest quality. The second movement, Menuetartig, nicht zu rasch (Like a minuet, not too quick) is richly scored with many inventive ideas. The third movement, Sehr langsam und ruhig (Very slow and calm) is of a different nature. It begins with a folk melody and then is followed by several sections, each with a different mood and tempo--there is a broad lyrical interlude

followed by a waltz-like episode, then a rousing two-step, then a lyrical elegiac folksong, and then an intermezzo. The finale, Sehr lebhaft (Very lively) is full of good spirits, there is an especially charming rondo and a highly effective coda. This is a first rate early modern work, completely tonal, which would surely be a success in concert but is not beyond experienced amateurs.



Pavel Haas (1899-1944) was born in Brno into a Jewish family Pavel interrupted studies in secondary school to enter the music school of the Beseda Philharmonic Society. He was drafted into the Austrian army during World War I, but never saw combat, and stayed in Brno. In 1920-22, Haas studies with Leos Janacek at the Brno Conservatory. His music is filled with the rhythmic complexity that one

often finds in Moravian folk songs. Unfortunately, he had to supplement his income working in his father's shoe store, and had many unpublished works. He perished in the Nazi concentration camp at Theresienstadt. He wrote three string quartets

String Quartet No.1, in c sharp minor, Op.3 dates from 1920 while he was studying with Leos Janacek. It is in one movement which is entitled Lente grave misterioso, Largemente e appassionato. The opening bars are quiet, almost funereal. The mystery is definitely a sad one. The impassioned sections begins with the cello and viola presenting a dark theme. The atmosphere grows more frenzied as the theme climbs into the upper strings. The music then proceeds through many different moods seemingly unrelated to each other. One can hear the influence of Karl Weigl at times, but even more the influence of Hindemith's new way. The work has much polytonality in it and on occasion barely sounds tonal. It ends as it began, softly with the cello singing the dark passionate theme but this time in a subdued fashion. An interesting work. Perhaps it could be brought to concert. Amateurs are not going to be able to sight read this work.

String Quartet No.2, Op.7 subtitled "From the Mountains of the Monkey" dates from 1925. Though not in a key, it is largely tonal. One clearly hears the influence of Janacek. The music represents a series of memories from Haas' summer vacations as a child in the Moravian mountains around Brno. The whole piece is filled with motion, as a travelogue might be. The movements have names like Landscapes / Horse, cart & driver / The moon and I / A Wild Night. Particularly striking are the glissandi in Horse, cart & driver and the use of a jazz band (bass, drums, cymbals, drumsticks and metal blocks) throughout A Wild Night. Criticisms after the premiere led Haas to do away with the jazz band. However when played in the original version with jazz band it certainly creates a memorable affect. This is an extraordinarily attractive modern work by a composer who is a master of his medium. A good work for concert but beyond amateurs.

String Quartet No.3, Op.15 dates from 1938. It is largely tonal but not in the traditional sense—perhaps it is simply more accurate to say it is not atonal. The first movement, Allegro moderato, uses two Czech folk themes for its subject. The music is edgy. In the following Lento, ma non troppo e poco rubato the St. Wenceslas chorale is combined with decorative touches borrowed from synagogue music—hard to hear it though. Overall, the Lento is lugubrious and plodding, though toward the end it seems to come to life with the insertion of Janacek's spirit. The theme of the finale, Thema con variazioni e fuga, sounds somewhat Hebraic. Each of the variations are quite interesting, varying tempo, emotion and tonality. The coda is a fugue which morphs into a chorale to conclude what is another excellent modern work. A candidate for concert professionals but not amateurs.

Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947) was born in Venezuelan capital Caracas. Hahn's family moved to Paris when he was three. He studied at the Conservatory under Massenet who considered him



a genius. Handsome and worldly, Hahn drew his friends from a much wider circle than other musicians and was greatly interested in the literary scene as well as the theater. Having a gifted voice and being an excellent pianist, Hahn needed no assistant for a vocal concert evening. He was also a deft conductor who eventually directed the Paris Opera. Hahn did not have a very high opinion of string quartets, writing

“Chamber music in the form of a simple string quartet is fundamentally incomplete, such a combination makes versatility out of the question; each part is a layer. Supposing that one of those parts briefly takes the lead, the result will never be any more than an accompanied solo; if two parts break free, it will be an accompanied duo, if three do so, there will not be enough basses, and if all four move at once, you end up with instability.” Given this viewpoint, you would not think he would write a quartet, yet in the Autumn of 1939, he took up the challenge and wrote two.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor is still firmly rooted in traditional tonality. The opening Andante molto moderato is by turns pensive, lively and charming. The two parts of the Récit et chanson de Provence—lent which follows are starkly contrasting—an ascetic recitativo followed by a lovely setting of a folk tune from Provence. An Andantino which comes next is bluesy, melancholy music with the lightest touch of French impressionism. The neo-classical last movement, Allegro assai, is light and full of energy.

String Quartet No.2 in F Major written immediately after does not sound very different. Animé is stylish and light and also neo-classical in mood, much in the way of Saint Saen’s 2nd Quartet. The excellent second movement, Très mouvementé is a lively scherzo featuring wonderful use chromaticism. The work’s center of gravity, Posément, très modéré is played muted. Though mostly quiet there is at times a sense of urgent yearning. The nervous finale, Très vite à un temps, shows some tonal harshness juxtaposed with extremely beautiful melodies. Hahn loved Mozart and these quartets seem an attempt to write as a 20th century French Mozart might have done. They would do well in concert and can be recommended to amateurs of good abilities.



August Halm (1869-1929) was born in the German town of Grossaltdorf in Württemberg. He was a man of many careers and composer was only one of these. He was also a conductor, a theologian, an influential writer on music and musicology. He studied composition with Joseph Rheinberger at the Munich Conservatory. He wrote two string quartets

His **String Quartet in B flat Major, Op.No.1** dates from 1903. It is two movements. The opening-Allegro moderato, though not so marked is a set of variations on a simple theme, which sounds rather like a children’s song. The final movement Im Minuett tempo is highly romantic and very beautiful but requires good ensemble work. Though a good work, I do not see it being offered in concert in this century but amateurs who can should give it a go.

In 1924, he brought out his **String Quartet No.2 in A Major**. Tonally it firmly in the Romantic era before WWI. In four short movement, It has some beautiful moments but it is very hard to keep together and very few will make the effort to try to get it together. It is doubtful that Halm played quartets.

Asgar Hamerik (1843-1923) was born in the Danish town of Frederiksberg. He studied piano at the Royal Danish Conservatory and composition with Niels Gade and J.P.E. Hartmann. He took further lessons in piano and conducting from the piano virtuoso and famous conductor Hans von Bülow. He then embarked on a career as a concert pianist. He knew many of the important



musical personalities of his time, including Liszt, Wagner, and Berlioz, all of whom were impressed with both his playing and his compositions. While touring in Italy, he was offered a job teaching at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, a position which he accepted, eventually becoming its director. He stayed for 27 years before returning to Denmark. Although during

his lifetime, he was considered perhaps the most important living Danish composer after Gade, many of his works remain unpublished. His early works show the influence of his teacher Gade and have a Nordic quality to them. His later compositions, reflect the considerable time he had spent in Paris and show some resemblance to the works of Paul Dukas and César Franck. He wrote only one work for string quartet.

His **Quartetto in a minor** dates from 1859 while he was studying with Gade and Hartmann. Both were impressed. In one movement, Allegro energico, the main theme is dramatic and dominated by its rhythm. A finely contrasting second subject is more lyrical. Short but impressive, it makes a fine program choice where a shorter piece is required or an encore. Not difficult, it can be recommended to both professionals and amateurs.



Peter Hänsel (sometimes spelled Haensel, 1770-1831) was born in the town Leppe in what was then Prussian Silesia. He was trained as a violinist and worked in Warsaw and St. Petersburg before obtaining employment in Vienna where he studied composition with Haydn during the 1790’s. Other than two years he spent in Paris during 1802-1803, his entire life was spent in Vienna, working as a violinist and composer. He devoted himself almost exclusively to the genre of chamber music, writing nearly 60 string quartets, 6 string trios, 5 string quintets and works for several other small ensembles. His style remained firmly rooted in the classical era and is closely related to that of his teacher Haydn but he also introduced French and Polish elements into his works, the result of his sojourning in those lands. I cannot pretend to be familiar with all of his quartets, although I have had the opportunity to discuss those I know.

String Quartet in g minor, Op.3 No.3 is the last of a set of three string quartets published in the German city of Offenbach am Main by the famous firm of Jean Andre in 1798. It is an early work composed either while he was still studying with Haydn or shortly thereafter. Unlike many of his later quartets, composed after his sojourns in Warsaw and Paris, it shows neither French nor Polish elements, but rather is a perfect model of the then Vienna Classical style espoused by Haydn. The opening movement, Allegro, starts off with a somewhat sad theme which is not really very allegro but more a moderato. However, after a bit, the tempo picks up and as it does, we hear echoes of his teacher. The lovely and slightly melancholy second movement, marked Menuetto allegretto, is actually the kind of minuetto which people could have actually danced because of its moderate tempo. There is a nicely contrasting trio section with an Austrian Ländler. The Adagio con espressione which comes next features a stately and valedictory melody. The finale does not have a tempo marking, it, but it is clearly a lively Presto.

String Quartet in g minor, Op.6 No.2 was the second of a set of three composed in 1799 and dedicated to Count Ernst von Palffy, an important Austro-Hungarian nobleman. The opening Allegro is filled with appealing melodies. The second movement is entitled Romanza, grazioso. The main theme is noble but the music is more dirge-like rather than a romance. Third is a heavily accented Menuetto, allegretto, the trio is limp. The finale, Allegro assai has some exciting moments mainly created by the use rising

and falling chromatic passages. This work does not deserve concert performance but may interest amateurs.

String Quartet in A Major, Op.9 No.2 is the second of a set of three composed around 1802 and dedicated to one Count Xaver Starzenski. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, starts off rather gently. Most of the action is in the first violin who is given many running scale-like passages. Not overly compelling. An *Adagio* which follows has a fine singing melody for its main subject. A quick section in the middle surprises. A well-executed movement. The *Menuetto presto* which comes third is a typical, very fine Viennese minuet. The trio section provides good contrast. The bustling finale, *Allegro vivace*, is the sort of thing Haydn often used for his finale. This quartet is strong enough to substitute in concert for the inevitable Haydn.

String Quartet in d minor, Op.16 dates from around 1805 and was dedicated to the famous opera singer Teresa Radicati geb. Bertinotti. The work opens with a slow *Andante* introduction. The main section, *Allegro molto*, is holds one's interest. The beautiful *Andante* which comes second is rather like a sad aria. A typical classical *Menuetto allegro* follows. The trio section, while effective is much like the minuet and as such does not provide a great contrast. The finale, *Allegretto piu tosto vivo*, starts off in rather ordinary fashion but suddenly turns operatic and becomes rather exciting. Perhaps strong for concert, good for amateurs.

String Quartet in C Major, Op.20 No.3 is the last of a set of three string quartets published in Vienna by the firm of Artaria around 1810. They were dedicated to the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, the leader of the string quartet which bore his name and introduced most of Beethoven's string quartets. In four movements, the powerful opening *Allegro con brio* is richly scored and produces an almost orchestral effect. The second movement, *Adagio*, is reflective and dreamy. In third place where one would normally find, at least in Vienna, a minuet, Hänsel places a *Polonaise*. He was quite fond of this dance form and his long years in Poland, helped to make his *Polonaises* among the very best of their type for the time. The dance has a rustic quality and one can almost imagine the foot stomping of peasants. The finale, *Allegro molto*, is a bit of a show piece for the first violin but there is also a clever fugue inserted midway through. Recommended for concert performance and to amateur ensembles.

His **String Quartet in B flat Major, Op.37** dates from 1828 and is one of the last ones he composed. Hänsel's style remained fairly consistent throughout his lifetime and despite the date of the composition, he remained true to the late Vienna Classical Style which he learned from Haydn. The opening *Allegro* is an appealing Haydnesque affair, lively and jovial. The second movement, *Andante poco adagio*, is stately, noble and lyrical. In third place is a playful *Scherzo, allegro* which clearly shows the influence of Haydn with its use of rhythm. A lyrical and slower trio follows. The finale, *Vivace*, with its use of triplets, calls to mind a steeple chase or bumptious ride over the country side. Hänsel made good use of his lessons from Haydn. Deserving revival and a concert performance. Also recommended to amateurs.



Howard Hanson (1896-1981) was born in Wahoo, Nebraska. He studied music locally and then in New York City at the Institute of Musical Art, which later became the Juilliard School of Music. He then continued his studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He pursued a career as a teacher and composer and his works were among the most frequently performed by an American composer. Winner of the *Prix de Rome* in Music, he spent three years in Italy. In 1924, he became director of the Eastman School of Music, a position he held for forty years, during which time he turned it into one of the finest music

schools in the world. Hanson's

String Quartet in One Movement dates from his time in Italy and was completed in 1923. The duration of a full length string quartet, the work, though in one movement, is divided into several smaller sections. There are two dominant themes, which are related to each other. Each is presented in a different tempo marked *Tempo I* and *Tempo II*. The Quartet is completely tonal though not traditionally so. Full of emotion, tension and lyricism, it is riveting from start to finish. This is a fine work which deserves concert performances and can also be recommended to experienced amateur quartet groups.



Hamilton Harty (1879-1941) was born in the Irish town of Hillsborough. He studied viola, piano and organ initially with his father, a professional organist. He subsequently studied piano at the Royal Irish Academy with Michelle Esposito and then pursued a career as an accompanist, conductor and composer. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.1 was completed in 1901. It has for its opening movement, *Allegro con brio*, a vibrant march-like theme for its main subject. The yearning second subject, more lyrical, provides a nice contrast. This is followed by an exciting *Vivace*. The third movement, *Andante pastoral*, is lovely aptly conveying the mood of its title. The main theme of the finale, *Allegro vivace*, is a whirling affair nicely holding the listener's attention, the second theme, though providing a nice contrast, is somewhat of a let-down. All in all, this is a good work, perhaps suitable for concert and certainly can be recommended to amateurs.

His **String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op.5** dates from 1902. It begins with a passionate *Allegro ma non troppo*. Well-written, but the thematic material leaves no impression. The second movement, *Vivace sempre leggiero*, is a scherzo and here the thematic material is more memorable. A *Lento* follows. Here the viola is given pride of place, perhaps a reference to Harty's own instrument. It is lyrical but mostly reflective with not much in the way of contrast or drama. The finale, *Allegro con brio*, is genial and playful but hardly riveting in any way. This is an okay work. There is no question that it well-written, but there is nothing here which calls out for concert performance. Much of it lacks the inspiration that one finds in his first quartet. Amateurs, on the other hand, might find it pleasant.

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) is, of course, one of the most famous composers, often called the father of the string quartet. There is nothing I can add here which has not already been written except to comment that I do not think most of his 83 string quartets are worth your time and certainly do not belong in the concert hall where they still frequently appear simply because Haydn wrote them. With the exception of the *Op.20* quartets in which he discovered the viola and cello, none of the works before his *Op.50* quartets have decent part-writing for the lower voices. The quartets which are worth your time are those of *Opp.50, 54, 55, 64, 71, 76, 77* and *103*.



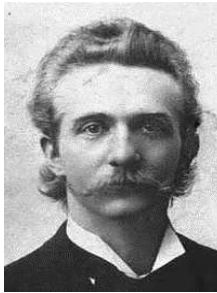
Michael Haydn (1737-1806) Franz Joseph's younger brother like all composers from this period wrote a lot of music. Most sources say he wrote at least twenty string quartets. Unfortunately, they are not particularly inspired works. I have played a few and basically do not wish to spend any more time with them. The thematic material is ordinary and leaves no impression. I cannot see any reason to bring these works into the concert hall or the homes of amateurs. If his last name

were not Haydn, he would have certainly fallen into oblivion like Gassmann and several others of his ilk.



Friedrich Hegar (1841-1927) was born in the German city of Leipzig. He studied violin, music theory and composition at the Leipzig Conservatory and pursued a career as a conductor, holding positions in Warsaw and later Zurich where he served as the conductor of the Tonhalle Orchestra and director of the Zurich Music Conservatory.

His **String Quartet in f sharp minor, Op.46** dates from 1920. It is written in late or post Romantic style. It makes a strong impression but it is not an easy work to play. The opening movement, *Allegro non troppo*, is powerful, dramatic and occasionally, but only briefly, crosses the border of traditional tonality. The second movement, a deeply felt *Adagio*, expressing a sense of yearning, presents some pretty strong intonation obstacles. Next comes an *Allegretto moderato*, which begins in the form of a *intermezzo*. It is not only rhythmically tricky but also full of intonation challenges. The finale is an impressive *Allegro agitato*, but not at all easy to play. This is not a work for amateurs but if brought into concert, I think it would make a strong impression.



Anton Hegner (1861-1915) was born in Copenhagen. He began his studies as a violinist but soon switched to the cello. He studied that instrument and composition at the Royal Danish Conservatory. In Denmark, he enjoyed a career as a soloist, but in 1893 moved to New York at the invitation of Walter Damrosch who offered him the principal cello chair of the New York Philharmonic. He also served as cellist of the famous Brodsky String Quartet for many

years and continued to perform both in Europe and America. In addition he was a respected composer and many of his works were often performed during his lifetime.

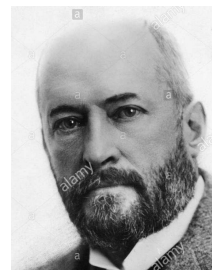
He is said to have written five string quartets, although only his **String Quartet in B flat Major, Op.13** appears to be the only one to have survived. It was published in 1905, but composed around 1890. In four movements, the thematic material of the quartet is appealing but it is the Hegner's attraction to unusual rhythmic material which makes this quartet interesting and distinctive. This is particularly so in the first three movements. The quartet opens with a dramatic *Andante sostenuto* introduction which leads to the main section *Allegro moderato* with its unusual and catchy drumbeat rhythm, a rhythm which from measure to measure though similar is never quite the same and is constantly undergoing a morphic change. Over the drumbeat rhythm we hear the soaring melody, heroic melody first in the violin and then the viola. The second movement, *Allegro moderato*, is a slinky *intermezzo*, muted in the upper three voices. As the movement is developed, the syncopated rhythm creates some unusual jolts. A fast moving, pounding *Scherzo* with a lovely, lyrical trio section in which the cello is given the lead, comes next. But Hegner throws in some rhythmic surprises even in the trio. The finale, a *Rondo*, though playful is somewhat trite and while I would not say it ruins what would otherwise be a very good quartet, it does bring it down a notch. Certainly a good choice for amateurs.

Gustav Helsted (1857-1924) was born in Copenhagen, the son of the composer Carl Helsted from whom he had his first music lessons. Helsted studied organ and composition at the Royal Danish Conservatory with Niels Gade and J.P.E. Hartmann. He pursued a dual career as a prominent church organist, and professor



at the Conservatory. Along with Carl Nielsen and Louis Glass, he was co-founder of the Danish Chamber Music Society. In this quartet as well as his later music, one can hear the influence, Carl Nielsen, Richard Strauss and Mahler. He wrote three string quartets, I am unfamiliar with the first two, Op.3 in d minor, dating from 1884 and Op.19 in c minor from 1891. However, I am familiar with his *Decet* of the same year as the second quartet and it is a middle late Romantic era work.

His **String Quartet No.3 in f minor, Op.33** was composed in 1917 and published two years before his death in 1922. The twenty six years which separate this work from the earlier ones were momentous and not just musically. The music, and this is in each movement, alternates between thematic material which has a certain hardness and astringency and late Romanticism made more beautiful by what proceeds it. The main theme of the opening *Allegro con fuoco* is dramatic, powerful and thrusting. A second subject is more lyrical. The movement which follows, *Presto appassionato*, is a nervous, angular *scherzo*. An impressive, slower *Andante sostenuto*, a cross between a funeral march and a dirge, serves as the third movement. The finale, *Allegro risoluto*, proceeds in much the same manner as the opening movement, with a dry but energetic main subject followed by more traditional late romantic melody. It is strong enough for concert though it will require experience amateurs.



Edward Swan Hennessy (1866-1929) was born in Rockford, Illinois and grew up in Chicago. It is not known where his early music education took place, though presumably it was in Chicago. Some sources suggest he studied at Oxford before attending the Stuttgart Conservatory. He lived in London for several years and finally settled in Paris in 1903. While his earlier works were firmly in the Romantic style à la Schumann,

his later works were all influenced by the French Impressionists. He wrote four string quartets.

String Quartet No.1, Op.46, subtitled *Suite*, owes much to Ravel and Debussy and sound a great deal like them. It dates from 1912. The opening *Allegro* is pleasant and flowing. The *Adagio* which comes next is rather soporific. Good music to doze off to. The *Allegretto* which follows shows some movement but the thematic material is vapor. The finale is in two parts. It begins with an appealing *Andante sostenuto* which sounds rather like a sad Irish folk melody. However, it goes on too long and interest wanes. The second part, *Vivacissimo*, is an Irish jig. All in all, the best movement of a rather mediocre work. If the three other movements were as good, it might be worth playing.

String Quartet No.2 Op.49 came out in 1920. It begins with a unisono *Andante* introduction and then oozes into a very romantic and lyrical affair. A dark, searching *Allegro* follows. It is as if the sun were trying to break through some very dark clouds. The third movement, *Interlude, Andante*, has a folkloric sound to it, possibly Irish. The concluding *Allegro* is also tinged with Irish dance melody. Tonally this quartet is not as adventurous as the first, does not sound French, is more approachable, perhaps could be given in concert and can be recommended to amateurs.

In 1927, **String Quartet No.3, Op.61** came out. Simply titled *Introduction*. It is pleasant, like taking a trip to nowhere. Not offensive, not memorable. Next comes a movement entitled *Les Ecosseis*. It was intended to be based upon a Scottish melody, it is rather hard to find any crumbs of this other than the fact that it is dour. The third movement is entitled *Les étudiants*. Just what it has to do with students is not clear although it starts with a jolly dance, it is interrupted a highly dramatic interlude which in no

way conjures up school children. The finale *Les fees* perhaps comes closer to convey its title if one thinks of some rather sad fairies and then some frantic ones. It is a kind of lobotomized Paul Dukas. I do not think it would do well in concert nor can I recommend it to amateurs.

Finally, we have **String Quartet No.4, Op.75** from 1930. The opening *Andante con moto* is melancholy but nicely done. A mysterious sounding *Andante* serves as the second movement. As it progresses the mystery disappears and it becomes a sad Irish plaine. A playful *Allegretto scherzoso* comes next. It makes very effective use of *pizzicato* which all four voices are playing in the beginning. The arco sections are a set of variations on the *pizzicato* theme. This is a good movement. The finale, *Allegro con brio*, begins as an urgent march. It is nicely developed. This, in my opinion, is his best quartet, deserving a concert airing and can be recommended to amateurs.



Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805-1847) prohibited from pursuing the equivalent musical career as her brother Felix by the constraints of the gender conventions of the time nonetheless was given the same music education as her brother. She is said to have composed some 400 works most of which remain unpublished. Her family opposed her desire to be a professional musician and it was only after marrying the painter Wilhelm Hensel that she was free to compose.

Her only **String Quartet in E flat major** dates from 1834. To say that it sounds like a work by her brother is an understatement. If you did not know whose work you were listening to, you would guess Felix. This is not surprising given that the two were almost unnaturally close. The begins with a sad *Adagio ma non troppo* which recalls her brother's Op.13 quartet with which she would certainly have been familiar. Next comes a *Scherzo* dominated by its rhythms. The third movement, *Romanze*, is sad and resigned. The finale, *Allegro molto vivace*, has a lot of rushing forward movement and rushing about. Not at all a bad work, in many ways superior to some of those of her brother, which often sound like they were written at the piano with the left hand parts being given to the lower voices. Not so here. Certainly worth concert performance if for no other reason than it is by Felix Mendelssohn's sister. However the work can stand on its own merits. Ignaz Moscheles the virtuoso pianist who taught both Mendelssohns thought Fanny the better player. Who knows if she had been allowed, or if we had more of her published work, we might find that she was just as good as Felix if not better.



Georg Henschel (1850-1934) was born in the then Silesian city of Breslau. He studied piano and voice at the Leipzig Conservatory and became well known as a singer, pianist, conductor and composer in Germany, England and the United States, where he was the first conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Several of his compositions at one time were held in high regard but disappeared from concert programs after the First World War.

His **String Quartet in E flat Major, Op.55** dates from 1897. The work begins with a short *Andante* introduction which leads to the main section *Allegro* which shows the influence of his close friend Brahms, however, it does rise to that level of excellence. The second movement, *Andante con moto*, is a set of variations based on a simple, song-like theme. Several of the variations have unusual tempi and rhythms which sound contrived but there is an all *pizzicato* variation which stands out as well above average. A reasonably good *scherzo*, *Allegro molto*, with its *Ländler*-like melody follows. A acceptable trio provides some

contrast. The finale, *Andante con moto*, quasi *allegretto*, is a rondo sounding much like Brahms. This is a decent work which can be recommended to amateurs who should get pleasure from it. Although it was dedicated to the famous Kneisel Quartet of Boston, who premiered it, I see no reason to bring back it into the concert hall when there are too many other forgotten works from this era which are far more deserving.



Johann (von) Herbeck (1831-1877) was born in Vienna just plain Johann Herbeck and was later ennobled for his conducting work. Largely self-taught, he became one of Vienna's leading conductors. Remembered, if at all, today for premiering Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*. A devotee of Brahms as well as Schubert, he was instrumental in getting Bruckner appointed to the Vienna Conservatory. He wrote two string quartets, the first never saw the light of day.

String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.9 appeared in 1864 and was dedicated to Joseph Hellmesberger, the well-known concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic. The first movement, *Un poco moto quasi Moderato*, is genial. A lively *Scherzo* with contrasting trio follows. The *Largo assai* which is the third movement has a beautiful main theme nicely handled. The finale, *Allegro zingarese*, is in the spirit of his friend Brahms and is quite effective bringing what is a rather good work to a close. I can warmly recommend this quartet to amateurs and perhaps the occasional concert performance might be in order.



Friedrich Hermann (1828-1907) was born in the German city of Frankfurt am Main. He was a student at the Leipzig Conservatory, studying composition with Mendelssohn and Niels Gade and violin with Ferdinand David. After graduating he obtained the position of principal violist of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and at the age of 19 started teaching at the Conservatory where he later became a professor. Besides his work with the Conservatory and the Orchestra, Hermann was a member of the Gewandhaus Quartet. In 1878, in order to devote himself to teaching, composing, and editing, he resigned all appointments except the Conservatory. His work as an editor is well known and includes compositions by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven as well as those by the famous violinists such as Kreutzer, Beriot and Rode. In addition to his work as an editor, he composed a symphony, a quartet for wind instruments, and several other chamber music works, which clearly shows his affinity with the new emerging romantic virtuoso style that was part and parcel of 19th century string playing.

His **String Quartet in e minor, Op.8** was composed during the 1850's, not long after Mendelssohn's death, who at the time had been considered the greatest composer since Beethoven. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the compositions of a recent student of Mendelssohn should show the influence of that master. This is not particularly evident however in the opening movement, *Allegro appassionato*. A dramatic solo in the cello brings forth the lyrical and yearning main theme, later to be taken up by the violins. The second section is gentler, almost pastoral. The second movement is a *Scherzo*. Here the influence of the great Felix can be heard at once. By turns exciting and then playful, this appealing music could well have been written by Mendelssohn. The opening tonality of the *Adagio*, which comes next, reminds a bit of Mozart's *Dissonant Quartet* but this quickly leads to a highly romantic song without words, full of long-lined singing melodies. The finale, *Allegro scherzando ed assai vivace*, might well have been entitled "orientale" with its original, eastern

-sounding main theme. In the two following themes, again we can hear echoes of Mendelssohn. This is a good work, which is fun to play, of no technical difficulty and should be quite attractive to amateur quartet players.



Louis Ferdinand Herold (1791-1833) was born in Paris and attended the conservatory there. He was considered a virtuoso both on the piano and the violin, which he studied with Rodolfo Kreutzer. He made his name as an opera composer and one or two of these occasionally get performed although he was considered one of France's best during his lifetime and for much of the 19th century. His

three string quartets date from 1814. They were well received and apparently frequently performed but quickly disappeared after his death. Herold was also a quartet performer and his quartets are written in true quartet style and not the quatuor brillant style of his teacher and violin virtuosi such as Spohr. I must admit, Rather we find he takes his cues from Haydn and Pleyel and the part-writing is quite even. I must admit, I have not played these works but only heard them.

String Quartet No.1 in D Major is a pleasant work which can be recommended as it presents no technical problems and plays quite nicely, but I would not bring it into the concert hall as the thematic material is too ordinary.

In **String Quartet No.2 in C Major** the first violin takes its usual leading role. Much the same of this work can be said as of No.1, however, the thematic material is a bit stronger, still I would not bring it into the concert hall.

String Quartet No.3 in g minor makes a somewhat stronger impression, perhaps because it is in the minor. While the first two quartets are in four movements, this one is in three and lacks a minuet. Of the three, the thematic material is probably the best. Except to show what a famous opera composer produced in his youth, I see no reason to bring any of these quartets into the concert hall.



The Austrian composer **Heinrich von Herzogenberg** (1843-1900) studied at the Vienna Conservatory with Otto Dessoff among others. He has sometimes been attacked as nothing more than a pale imitation of Brahms, of whom he was a great admirer. There is no denying that his music often shows the influence of Brahms, however, listeners and players alike have discovered that it is original and fresh,

notwithstanding the influence of Brahms. Most of his chamber is first rate and Brahms might well have wished he had written some of it. Toward the of his life, Brahms, who was not in the habit of praising other composers publicly, wrote of Herzogenberg, whom he had often harshly criticized in the past, "He is able to do more than any of the others." He wrote a considerable amount of chamber music, including five string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.18 dates from 1876. The first movement, Allegro moderato, is beautiful, its two main themes are ingratiating and lovely. The first theme, with its accompaniment figure in the viola is quite original and well done. The development section is good. The second movement, Andante, reminds one of the corresponding movement of Schumann's Third String Quartet, while the Scherzo, presto which follows, with its lyrical and contrasting trio section, is harmonically interesting and full of humor. The finale, Allegro con fuoco, has a whimsical fugue for its first subject, while the second theme has folkloric roots. A fine work suitable for concert or home.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor, Op.42 No.1 is the first of a

set of three which appeared in 1884. They were dedicated to Brahms. It has many original ideas. The first movement, Allegro energico, begins in ordinary fashion but as soon as the poetic and lovely second theme is introduced the music rises to the level of extraordinary. The second movement, Andantino, is an example of what a good theme and variation format should sound like. Superb contrasts only a few measures apart leave a lasting impression. The passionate Beethovenian Scherzo Allegro molto, which comes next is magnificent and is topped off by a mellow trio section. The finale, Allegro, opens with a march-like theme, a lovely second melody provides excellent contrast. In the coda, there is a very powerful stretto which brings the music to a feverish pitch. A first rate work which should be brought into concert and made part of the repertoire. A good substitute for the too often played Brahms quartets. Not to be missed by good and experienced amateur players.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.42 No.2 is the second of this set. The first movement, Allegro, begins like a ballad, but by virtue of a variety of time changes reaches several powerful climaxes but ends tenderly. A chaste and heartfelt Andante follows. A gripping, energetic Scherzo, allegro comes next. A lyrical trio section provides excellent contrast. The finale, Allegro con brio, opens with a lovely, lilting theme. Running 16th note passages in the lower voices create a sense of unrest, which then is followed by a playful subject full of grace and a very effective coda to conclude. This is a good work, perhaps not as strong as the preceding quartet but still good enough for an occasional concert airing. Requires good amateur players.

String Quartet No.4 in G Major, Op.42 No.3 is the last of the set. The first movement, Allegro, begins with a pleasing main theme which leads to a lovely, folkloric second subject. The second movement, Andantino, has a very good set of variations based on a sweet, song-like theme. The main section of the third movement, a Minuet, allegro moderato, is dignified and calls to mind a similar movement from Beethoven's Op.59 No.3. The charming trio provides excellent contrast. The finale, Vivace, at least with regard to the prancing main subject, could well be something Haydn might have penned and the second subject also has an antique quality to it. An work suitable for concert or home.

String Quartet No.5 in f minor, Op.63 dates from 1889 It is dedicated to the Joachim Quartet, perhaps the most famous ensemble of its type at that time. It is an interesting work for several reasons. Unlike certain other works, the spirit of Brahms is nowhere to be found. Instead, one hears a composer who has returned to Beethoven and his Late String Quartets, especially so in the first movement which begins with a lengthy Lento introduction which is full of foreboding and a dramatic, sense of brooding created by his use of tremolo. In the riveting main section of the movement, Allegro moderato, several impassioned outbursts serve to interrupt the melodic material, a la Late Beethoven. A second interesting feature of this work is that it only has three movements, unusual for the time. The middle movement, a flowing Andante, is essentially lyrical and song-like. Although there is no scherzo, the finale, a Vivace, certainly could have served as one had Herzogenberg so desired. It is a bumptious and harried ride over rough countryside in 6/8 time. Later in what appears to be a recapitulation, a heavily accented hunting motif is introduced. Not immediately as appealing as his earlier quartets, just as Beethoven's Late Quartets were not as appealing as his earlier ones. But this is a profound work which deserves to be heard in concert and deserves the time of experience amateur players.

Konrad Heubner (1860-1905) was born in the Dresden. He studied at several places including the Leipzig Conservatory. He pursued a career as a composer and teacher, eventually becoming director of the Koblenz Conservatory. He wrote two quartets.

I am only familiar with his **String Quartet No.2 in e minor** dates from 1902. The thematic material to the opening movement



Allegro molto moderato is weak, tonally wayward and not easy to make sound good. However, the second movement, Adagio con moto, is quite attractive and makes a good impression. Next there is a Tempo di Minuetto, sounding of Brahms but not as good as his model. Decent but not more than that. The finale, Allegretto, is a cross between a set of variations and a fugue. At times interesting but it goes on for too long and is not particularly suited to be a concluding movement and parts are technically very difficult. Overall, there is not enough here to justify concert performance, although it could interest amateur groups.



Had **Alfred Hill** (1869-1960) been a European or even an American composer, surely he and his music would be better known than they are today. It was his misfortune to be an Australian and virtually all of his wonderful music is unknown outside of that country and New Zealand where he also spent several years. Hill was born in Melbourne but his family left for Wellington, New Zealand when he was three. It was there he studied

the violin and trumpet eventually winning the chance to study at the Leipzig Conservatory where he graduated with honors in 1891, winning a prize in both composition and performance. His playing made an impression on Carl Reinecke (the Conservatory's director and the conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra) who drafted Hill into the violin section of that famous orchestra while he was a student. Reinecke and Hans Sitt were Hill's composition teachers, the former for chamber music. After his sojourn in Europe, Hill returned first to New Zealand to take up a conducting job in Wellington. In 1910, he settled in Sydney where he served as a professor at the New South Wales Conservatory for much of the rest of his life. He wrote in virtually every genre, including 17 string quartets of which I have played five.

String Quartet No.1 in B flat Major, he subtitled *The Maori*. Hill began work on it while still in Leipzig but did not complete it until 1896 at which time he was living and working in New Zealand. The outer movements were roughed out in Germany while the middle movements came later and incorporate Maori folk melodies. The opening movement, Moderato, allegro, begins with genial, expansive theme which is followed by a lyrical second melody. The second movement is entitled Waiata, which in Maori means songs accompanying the Dance. Two dances are presented. In the first section we hear the Haka Dance, characterized by a powerful and thrusting melody. A trio section, entitled Poi Dance, is slower and more graceful. The third movement is entitled Tangi, Maori for Lament. As the title implies, this is sad, but beautiful music. Though sad, it is not tragic or funereal. A middle section is somewhat faster but does not really change to mood. The finale, Allegro moderato, is full of lively good spirits and playfulness. This is a fine work with many original and fresh ideas which would merit inclusion in the concert hall as well as a position on the music stands of amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor was composed during the years 1907-11. He gave it the title *A Maori Legend in Four Scenes*, and it is definitely intended as a programmatic work. The first movement, Allegro agitato is entitled The Forest. The listener is taken deep within the forest with its mysterious sounds to witness a deadly struggle between a monster and a magical crane. In the second movement, Adagio, subtitled The Dream, the hero hears the crane call out for help. The crane then transformed into a beautiful maiden tells him that if he slays the monster, she will help him find the mythical tree from which he can carve a canoe to take him across the waters. The sad cries of the crane can be heard as it is beset upon by the monster. The third movement is a

Scherzo entitled The Karakia, the magical tree. The hero has slain the monster, and with the help of the forest birds fashions a canoe from the Karakia. In the finale, entitled The Dedication, the canoe is solemnly dedicated and a gay celebration follows. This is very beautiful, highly evocative music. It is a first rate work, very original and can be warmly recommended for the concert hall as to amateur groups. That Hill gave several of his quartets nicknames was probably due to the fact that the quartets of Joachim Raff whose music was much in vogue at the time he was studying in Europe, also had such names.

His **String Quartet No.5 in E flat**, subtitled *The Allies* dates from 1920. One might think there would be something military about the quartet, its composition date following on the heels of WWI, however this is not the case. The opening Allegro Risoluto begins turbulently, giving way to a tranquil interlude. The attractive second theme is almost playful. In the excellent Intermezzo, Allegretto which follows, the first violin a la Mendelssohn is giving the melody over the pizzicato in the other voices. In the clever trio section, the viola and cello introduce the melody to the pizzicato accompaniment of the violins. A Romanze, andantino is in late Romantic style and very beautiful. Some of the tonalities show affinity to Villa Lobos' First Quartet. A middle section, agitato, is stunning. The finale, Allegro, is full of upbeat, happy melodies with considerable forward motion and breadth. A fine work, deserving to be better known and heard in public.

String Quartet No.6 in G Major, subtitled *The Kids* was composed in 1927 for Hill's students at the New South Wales Conservatory. The jaunty opening Allegro has two very attractive themes and very good part-writing. The second movement, Scherzo, opens with a direct quote from the first two measures of the second movement to Beethoven's Op.18 No.4. Hill then takes this rhythm and creates a sunny work entirely different in feel from Beethoven with an excellent contrasting trio. The beautiful main theme to the Adagio ma non troppo is introduced by the cello. This is very fetching music. The finale, Allegretto, is based on a syncopated theme. In the middle of the movement, Hill cleverly places a little fugue as a kind of development. This is a slight work, under 20 minutes in length, the ideas within are neither monumental nor weighty, but it pleasant to hear and to play.

String Quartet No.11 in d minor was composed in 1935. While the earlier quartets are firmly rooted in the tonalities of the mid 19th Century, this work shows some advancement in tonal thought. The landscape to the opening Andante-Allegro is not only bleak but bears the influence of French impressionism. An Adagio also showing the influence of the both late Romanticism and Impressionism comes next. The finale is an Allegretto which moves back and forth between major and minor. Though certainly more modern-sounding, Hill shows he had firmly rejected the 12 tone, serial and atonal schools of composition. The quartet is a good modern work that can stand performance in concert.



Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) was born in the German town of Hanau near Frankfurt, where he studied violin and composition at the conservatory. He is one of the best known German composers of the first part of the twentieth century. His music ranges from the late Romantic to the atonal and back again. He spent a good part of his life performing in string quartets as a violist. He wrote seven complete string quartets and two shorter

works meant to be parodies—**Minimax**, **String Quartet Military Music Repertory**, should be tried by all quarteters with a sense of humor. Most of the pieces are well within the reach of amateurs. It was premiered in 1923 at the Donaueschingen Music Festival of which Hindemith was the director. Dedicated to Princess Wilhelmina and Prince MAX von Furstenburg the chief financial backers of the festival and good friends of the compos-

er, it was performed by the Amar Quartet in which Hindemith was its violist. There is an existing photo which shows them marching out onto the stage clown-like, wearing old-fashioned military hats made out of paper and carrying their bows on their shoulders as if they were rifles. It has six movements which parody the typical military band repertoire which Hindemith had come to know all too well as a drummer in such a band during the First World War. *Armeemarsch 606* is a parody of a Prussian march which had been popular since the time of Frederick the Great. During the middle of it, one of the tuba's (cello) valves becomes stuck with unfortunate and hilarious results. The overture *Wasserdichter und Vogelbauer* is a play on von Suppé's famous *Poet & Peasant Overture*. Next is *An Evening at the Source of the Danube*, a duet for two distant trumpets (violin & viola) who "quote" the great works of Beethoven and Wagner in parallel thirds. This is followed by the marvelous *Dandelions by the Brookside*, a waltz medley which sends up just about every famous waltz that came out of Vienna but is also very pretty.

The parody written for string quartet is the marvelous **Overture to the Flying Dutchman as Sight Read by a Second Rate Spa Orchestra in the Main Fountain Square at 7:00 in the Morning**. The work requires rather good players of a professional standard to pull it off. The piece is not a parody of Wagner's music, but rather exactly the kind of music-making described in the title. Hindemith knew this kind of music making only all too well from personal experience as he had played in various concert orchestras in his youth. He shows how over-tired and uninterested musicians wade through a score with a certain stoic routine, a score which they probably know but which they have never previously performed together. Unmoved by false intonation or wrong entries the musicians show us all the tricks they use to battle their way through their self-made musical chaos. They finally slip into another piece altogether, which seems to suit them better, but then confidently end up with a finale which makes one shudder! Hindemith's seven string quartets can be divided into two distinct periods. Quartet Nos. 1 through 5 were written between 1915-1923, when he was in his twenties. Quartets Nos. 6 and 7 date from 1943-1945, when he was living in the States. Unlike the earlier works, they have no opus numbers. I have played the first five but only heard the last two.

String Quartet No. 1 in C Major, Op. 2 dates from 1915, however, it was lost and only discovered in the mid-1990s. Composed while he was still a student one can clearly hear the influence of Brahms and Dvorak. Full of appealing melodies it is the most accessible of his quartets.

String Quartet No. 2 in f minor, Op. 10 dates from 1918. It is tonal and post Romantic. A fine work but difficult requiring players of professional standard to perform it successfully, although good amateurs can manage it for their own purposes.

The same can be said of **String Quartet No. 3 in C Major, Op. 16** which was composed in 1920. It is a work full of youthful passion and power and not without moments of beauty but unfortunately, it is not a work for the average amateur.

String Quartet No. 4, Op. 22 followed quickly in 1921 and while tonality is not completely abandoned, it is a five movement polytonal work approaching Bartok. Amateurs need not apply.

String Quartet No. 5, Op. 32 came out in 1923. In the same style as number four, it makes a strong impression.

String Quartet No. 6 in E flat Major dates from 1943 and was commissioned by the famous Budapest String Quartet. Don't let the key fool you, it is not traditionally tonal. Angular and polytonal, not composed with amateur players in mind.

String Quartet No. 7 in E flat Major was finished two years later in 1945. It is the shortest of the quartets. Supposedly written with his wife, an amateur cellist, in mind, it is still a difficult polytonal work. The key signature is no indication of a return to traditional tonality. All of these quartets have from time to time appeared in concert and have been recorded. One would have

thought that the first five, especially at the very least, the first two, would have gained some traction, but they have not.



Hermann Hirschbach (1812-1888) was born in Berlin. His given name was Hermann but he signed himself Herrmann. Hirschbach led an multi-faceted life. He initially studied medicine but switched to music when he was 20, studying the violin, composition and musicology. He was a prolific composer, and was intensely interested in chamber music, writing some **13 string quartets**, four string quintets, a septet, an octet, two clarinet quintets and several other pieces. He

wrote extensively on music and was a leading music critic, working closely with Robert Schumann, who was not only impressed by Hirschbach's chamber music but also by his musical criticism, so much so, that he invited Hirschbach to collaborate with him in the publication of the influential *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. If this were not enough, Hirschbach was considered one of the leading European chess players of the mid 19th century, Schumann wrote glowingly of Hirschbach's chamber music which he thought was a successor to Beethoven's Late Quartets and akin to the path Berlioz was taking. And he admitted that Hirschbach's early quartets entitled *Life Pictures for String Quartet* influenced his own Op.41 efforts. There is no denying that the music is arresting, dramatic, and very effective. But at the same time, it must be admitted that this not traditional chamber music nor did Hirschbach intend it to be. He intended his music to be tone poems conveying poetic pictures. He was one of the first to write a quartet for voice and strings. In the few quartets of his I have played, the first violin dominates affairs and the part it is given seems to me to be unnecessarily difficult. While the other instruments are not ignored, their parts too are often quite tricky and hard to pull off. Nor can one say this is a conversation between four voices normal sense. Other than as curiosities by a composer who was trying to find new paths and who was an astute music critic, these works do not belong in the concert hall.



Heinrich Anton Hoffmann (1770-1842) was born in the German city of Mainz. As his father was a court councilor to the Elector, he was well educated attending university and taking degrees in law and philosophy, all the while studying violin on which he became a virtuoso. He pursued a career as a concertmaster and Kapellmeister or Music Director of several important theaters, mostly in Frankfurt, where he got to know Mozart, who so admired his playing that the two of them often

played chamber music together while Mozart was in Frankfurt. Hoffmann wrote some six string quartets which were clearly influenced by the Vienna Classical style of Haydn and Mozart.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.3 No.1 is the first of a set of three which came out in 1794, which were much like the works of the Wranitzky brothers and Franz Krommer. The work opens with a lively Allegro which has a very appealing subject as its main theme. The second movement, a jaunty Menuetto scherzoso, shows the influence of Haydn. It has a short, but charming trio. Next comes an Adagio which is followed by a perky Rondo. Though once popular, it was unavailable for a long time, but was reprinted by Edition Silvertrust. It is a fresh work from the Vienna Classical era and makes a pleasant change from Haydn.

String Quartet No.2 in B flat Major, Op.3 No.2 is the second of the set. It opens with an ominous Largo introduction leading to a very lively main section. The second movement, a typical south German Menuetto allegro sostenuto, is somewhat slower than Haydn-type minuets. This is followed by an Andante

with a set of four variations in which each instrument is given a chance. The finale is buoyant Rondo allegro scherzando. Both of these quartets are good enough to receive concert performance and can also be recommended to amateurs.

There is very little information available about the Berlin composer **Ludwig Hoffmann** (1830-). Even his date of death is unknown. Despite the fact that he seems to have been known during his lifetime, at present, there is virtually nothing to be found in the standard reference books whether in English or German. What information I have been able to find comes from one article which appeared in the late 19th century German music dictionary *Musikalisches-Conversations Lexicon*. Hoffmann was born in Berlin where he studied at the Prussian Academy of Arts with Carl Friedrich Runghagen. After graduating, from 1854 to 1868, he obtained conducting positions at city opera houses in Stettin, Bielefeld and Dresden. In 1868, he returned to Berlin and worked as a teacher and was elected vice chairman of the Berlin Musicians Society. The article makes no further reference to Hoffmann after 1875.

A pity because his **String Quartet in D Major** was composed during 1866-7 is rather a nice work. In four movements, the quartet opens with a genial Allegro grazioso and is followed by a lovely, singing Larghetto cantabile. The third movement, marked Vivace, is characterized by its unusual rhythm and counterpoint. The finale, Allegro con giusto, is a jovial affair. This is a good work which should be of interest to professionals and especially amateurs as it presents no technical difficulties.



Today, the name of **Franz Anton Hoffmeister** (1754-1812) lives on only because of his close friendship with Mozart, who named his K.499 D Major string quartet after him in recognition of all the money Hoffmeister had given him. Few people are also aware that he became a famous music publisher, his firm known to us today as Edition Peters. Hoffmeister arrived in Vienna at age 14 from western Germany where he had intended to study law. Like so many before and after him, he was lured away by the siren song of music. He decided on a career as a composer and, like most of his contemporaries, was a prolific one. We know from contemporary accounts that his music was held in high regard and those who have had the opportunity to play or hear it usually agree that there is much of value to be found therein. Like most composers from this era, he was prolific writing a great deal of chamber music including some 21 string quartets. Of these, his Op.14, a set of three, have received modern editions and will be discussed here.

String Quartet No.13 in F Major, Op.14 No.1 is the first of the set, which date from 1791. Prior to this time, he had composed 12 other quartets in two sets of six. The Op.14 show fine workmanship and that Hoffmeister had assimilated many of the advances Haydn and Mozart made. At a time when almost everyone else was still producing concertante quartets, although only in three movements, Hoffmeister's quartets show a kinship in form to those of Haydn and Mozart's late quartets. The melodies are fresh and attractive while the part-writing surprisingly good. The outer movements, two Allegros, are lively and Haydnesque. The striking middle movement, Poco adagio, has a lovely theme and a fine set of variations.

String Quartet No.14 in B flat Major, Op.14 No.2 begins with an Allegro in 6/8 time, starts off in genial fashion but soon racing passages, mainly in the violin come to the fore and add excitement. The middle movement, though titled, Adagio, is probably closer to an Andante based on its lovely main theme which gives the movement its subtitle, Romance. The finale, Allegro, is a real barn burner full of dynamic surprises a la Haydn's Surprise Symphony.

String Quartet No.15 in d minor, Op.14 No.3 is the only quartet of the set which is in four instead of three movements. The pattern follows the standard set by Haydn. The two outer movements, Vivace and Presto are lively and Haydnesque. A lovely Adagio cantabile comes second and a Minuetto takes the usual third position. While these works cannot be compared to Mozart's later works, No.2 can stand comparison with many of Haydn's quartets and would make a nice change in concert. All three can be recommended to amateurs with good first violinists.



Joseph Holbrooke (1878-1958) born near London in the town of Croydon. Both his parents were musicians and his early lessons were with his father. He was sent to the Royal Academy of Music in London and after graduating worked as a pianist and conductor, all the while composing. Eventually his big works for orchestra and chorus and his operas brought him considerable fame, however, after the First World War, he and his works fell into obscurity. He

composed a considerable amount of chamber music, most of which is of a high quality and awaits rediscovery. Holbrooke wrote a lot of chamber music, including five string quartets.

His **String Quartet No.1, Fantasy in d minor, Op.17(b)**, subtitled Fantasy Quartet came into being as a result of the Cobbett Phantasy Competition whose aim was to resuscitate British chamber music by encouraging British composers to write it. The form of the Phantasy was selected as it was thought to be created by 16th century British composers such as Purcell. The rules required the work to either be in one movement, although there could be sections, or in movements which had to be connected. Hence, while Holbrooke's quartet is in three movements, they are all closely related thematically and are played without interruption. The Fantasy Quartet was published in 1906. It does not follow classical structure but is more in the realm of programmatic music. The work is in three sections which are connected. They are named Departure (Allegro vigoroso), Absence (Adagio non troppo) and Return. The craftsmanship is very fine and this is a tonally pleasing work. Particularly appealing is the lusty finale. This quartet is fun to play and will certainly appeal to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 "Impressions", Op.59a is in two movements and dates from 1915 and the early months of the First World War. However, there is no overtly military music in it. Initially it was subtitled "War Impressions" but given its lack of military character, Holbrooke's publisher ultimately simply called it "Impressions". Over the years, there has been some confusion as to its opus number and has been called Op.58 and also 59a. Holbrooke gives the first movement the subtitle "Serenade Belgium 1915." The tempo is marked Andante carrezzevola. This is in no way a traditional serenade but more like an elegy as one might expect given the terrible killing battles of Arras and Ypres which had already taken place in Belgium. The music is somber and somewhat searching, but it is not a dirge. The second movement, Vivace non troppo, is subtitled "Russian Dance (On a Russian folk song)". It is a lively, upbeat folk dance which is given in four different versions, said to be affectionate tributes or parodies of Wagner, Grieg, Dvorak and Tchaikovsky.

String Quartet No.3 subtitled The Pickwick Club came in 1916. Holbrooke called it a humoresque in two parts. A humorous is meant to be a whimsical or fanciful musical composition. I did not find this a very difficult to play quartet either.

String Quartet No.4, Op.71 Suite No.1 of National Songs and Dances dates from 1916, and is the first of two suites for string quartet which became known as National Songs & Dances for string quartet. Holbrooke did not write a didactic, simple take on these folk tunes, but instead used them in a sophisticated fash-

ion as had classical composers since the time of Haydn. Suite No.1 consists of four movements and in each there is a wealth of mood and tempo changes. The first is entitled Come Lassies and Lads which is the title of the first folksong. There are two others: Simon the Cellarer and We All Love a Pretty Girl under the Rose. The second movement is entitled The Last Rose of Summer an Irish air from the late 18th century. The third movement is another well-known Irish air entitled Mavourneen Deelish also known as Savournin Deelish--My Dearest Darling. It also dates from the late 18th century. The finale, Strathspeys and Reels, is a set of 8 Scottish dances, most dating back to the early 18th century. They are in order of appearance: 1. The Deil among the Tailors, 2. Clydesdale Lassies, 3. Gillie Callum, 4. The Fife Hunt, 5. Green Grow the Rushes, 6. Johnny Made a Wedding Oath, 7. The Highland Man Kissed His Mother and 8. Over the Bogie with My Love. is a very interesting work, clearly first rate. Along with his other Folk Suite stands virtually alone in its unique use of British folk music in an early modern post romantic framework. Could be given in concert and played by adept amateurs.

String Quartet No.5 "Song and Dance", Op.72-Folksong Suite No.2 dates from 1917. Suite No.2 also was known as the Celtic Suite. Composed as they were during the First World War, the impulse was clearly to as a show of national pride. The first movement is entitled Strathspeys and features the following Scottish folksongs: Keep the Country Bonnie Lassie (from 1768), Tullochgorum (late 16th cent.), and Cameron's Got His Wife (1754). The second movement is entitled Song of the Bottle and is based on a well-known Welsh air of that name. The third movement is entitled All through the Night and uses the famous Yorkist folksong of the same name which commemorates the 1408 siege of the Lancastrian Castle of Harlech by the men of Yorkshire. The finale, Irish Jigs, uses the music of 9 famous Irish dance tunes: Garry Owen was one of the favorites of the Royal Irish Regiment and was played at the Battle of Waterloo among other places. There follows, Irish Washerwoman and Paddy O'Carroll both from the famous O'Neill collection. Next comes The Tigh Little Island and Roaring Jelly also known as Smash the Windows, then comes Paddy Whack and The Patriot also from the O'Neill Collection and the last two are Go to the Devil and St Patrick's Day, one of the most popular of all Irish quick-steps. Strong enough for concert and by good amateurs.



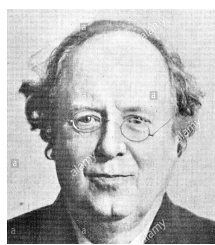
Iver Holter (1850-1941) was born in the Norwegian town of Gausdal. As a boy he was given violin lessons. Formal lessons began with Johan Svendsen and he then entered the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied with Carl Reinecke and Salomon Jadassohn. After graduating, he pursued a dual career as a conductor and composer. He succeeded Edvard Grieg as conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic and later served as

music director and conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic. Holter composed piano music, songs and choral music, a symphony, two string quartets, and several instrumental works. Generally, his music does not display as much Norwegian flavor as that of either Grieg or Svendsen.

However, that is not the case with his **String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major, Op.1** which was composed while he studying at Leipzig in 1879. The first movement starts with a short Lento introduction which quickly gives way to the main section Allegro molto con brio. The first subject is a heroic Nordic melody which is then followed by a softer and more lyrical second theme. The second movement, Andante con variazione, has for its theme what is probably a Norwegian folk melody. Several contrasting variations follow. The third movement, Allegro giocoso, although marked "Intermezzo" in the score, is a dance-like scherzo which reminds one a bit of Nordic hobgoblins a la Grieg. The finale, Vivace ed energico, begins with the violin giving out a heroic

theme over a pulsing eighth note accompaniment in the other voices. Soon all join in the festivities, which again is tinged with Nordic melody. The quartet is fun to play with good part-writing for all. It could be brought to concert and will please amateurs.

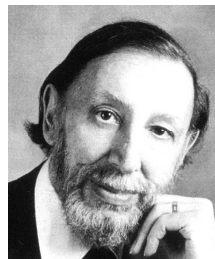
String Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.18 appeared in 1914. Concisely written and easy to follow. The first movement is a lyrical Allegro molto. The second movement, a deeply felt Poco adagio, has a folkish song-like quality. The fiery, heavily rhythmic scherzo, Appassionato ma non troppo allegro, which comes next makes an immediate impression. The middle section, which sounds a bit of bagpipes, makes a pretty contrast. The highly effective finale, Allegro vivace, begins with a short lento introduction. The powerful march-like main theme leads to a brilliant coda. A good work worthwhile and deserving attention.



Christian Frederik Emil though generally known as **C.F.E. Horneman** (1840-1906) to distinguish him from his composer father first name Emil, was born in Copenhagen. After graduating from the Leipzig Conservatory he pursued a varied career as a conductor, composer, teacher and music publisher. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor dates from 1859 while he was still a student at the Conservatory. In fact, it was submitted as his final requirement for graduating. The fact that it sounds as if Mendelssohn might have written the work is not particularly surprising as the composition teachers were all in thrall. Nonetheless, it is an effective work. The opening Allegro vivace is a bright, bustling affair. The Andante which follows though workman-like, leaves no particular impression. However, the Scherzo, Allegro molto, is a fine effort. The finale, Allegro molto, has a sense of yearning and much forward motion. Can be recommended to amateurs but not for concert.

Two years later in 1861, now back in Denmark, he wrote his **String Quartet No.2 in D Major**. A very Mendelssohnian Allegro molto opens this work. Even if it is derivative, it must be admitted that it is as good as anything Mendelssohn wrote. In the Adagio which follows, Horneman finally leaves Mendelssohn behind and the music sounds vaguely Beethovenian. A very nice Minuet, allegro follows but it seems, given the year is 1869, a bit antiquated. Of course, other contemporaries wrote minuets as well, but they are adapted to more modern tonalities whereas Horneman seems to look back to the 1820s. In the finale, Allegro, again we hear Mendelssohn and just like so many of Felix's pianistic works for strings there is much fast passage work as a substitute for thematic material. This is a better work than No.1 but I still do not think it worthwhile to bring it to the concert hall, but I can recommend it to amateurs.



Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000) was born in Somerville, Massachusetts. After graduating from the New England Conservatory, he devoted himself entirely to composing. He was a prolific composer penning more than 500 works, among them five string quartets. His style is tonal and was influenced by the New England Baptist music of his childhood and by the music of Jean Sibelius as well as many tonal ideas of music from the Far East.

In general his music is calming and gentle.

String Quartet No.1, subtitled Jupiter, dates from 1936. It begins with a restful Prelude and is followed by a Fugue with four subjects. It is from the four part fugue that the quartet gets its subtitle as Mozart in his Jupiter Symphony also wrote a four part fugue. Next comes an Andante lamentoso, which is more mysterious than mournful. The finale, Fugue, is the only part of the work showing any life or excitement. It is rather nervous affair.

String Quartet No.2, subtitled Spirit Murmurs, was composed in 1952 and is in seven short movements. The opening subdued, oriental sounding movement gives the quartet its subtitle. The fifth movement, Gamelan in Sossi Style. Gamelan is a type of Indonesian ensemble music. It is very repetitive and could easily put one to sleep. The final movement, 'Hymn' is New England church music.

String Quartet No.3, Reflections from My Childhood was composed in 1968. The opening movement, Andante, adagio, is mysterious and makes one wonder if he had a scary childhood. There are also touches of the Far East which could not have had much to do with his New England upbringing.

String Quartet No.4, subtitled The Ancient Tree, came two years later in 1970. The opening Adagio ma non troppo is calm and reflective. The second movement is a short Fugue which at least shows some life. The third movement, The work concludes with an Adagio, andante con moto, allegro. The three part finale his funereal and very subdued. The andante is not much more lively and it is only the perky allegro which wakes one up and take notice. I am not familiar with his fifth string quartet which he composed in 1976.

He also wrote **Four Bagatelles** in 1966 based on earlier compositions. In general, I find his chamber music rather soporific with only very rare episodes of anything lively. It is almost as if one entered an Oriental opium den where people are sleepily puffing on hubble bubble water pipes. The music is not hard to play and can be attractive.



Herbert Howells (1892-1983) was born in Lydney, Gloucestershire. His father was an amateur organist, and Herbert himself showed early musical promise. He attended the Royal College of Music where he studied with Charles Villiers, Stanford, Hubert Parry and Charles Wood. Stanford considered Howells one of his most brilliant and gifted students. He subsequently taught at the Royal College of Music and at London University.

His **Phantasy String Quartet, Op.25** dates from 1924. It features a cyclic approach to the presentation of the thematic material. It is in one continuous movement, however, it goes through many changes of mood. The melodic material is folkloric in nature and its development is similar to that which Liszt called metamorphosis. It is probably beyond most amateur players but would make a good candidate for concert. There was another quartet called In Gloucester given the number three. However, this is because the first version was lost on a train and a second version also disappeared. It was put together from a set of parts mysteriously found. I am not familiar with it.



Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) from early on, Hummel was recognized as a prodigy. He was not only considered one of the most important composers of his time but was also widely regarded as the greatest piano virtuoso of his era. We owe the transmission of Mozart's pianistic style and technique to him. He was perhaps the most important piano teacher of the first decades of the 19th century and virtually every first rate pianist who could afford his fees (Liszt couldn't) studied with him. His compositions, at the time, were held to be the equal of Beethoven. He was born in then Austro-Hungarian city of Pressburg, now Bratislava. He was talent was such that Mozart took him on as a student at no cost on the condition that Hummel lived with him. He was Mozart's only full time student. Some scholars have suggested that in 1803 Hummel wrote his three Op.30 String Quartets as a response to Beethoven's Op.18 Quartets of 1801.

This suggestion stems from the fact that in Vienna, Hummel was Beethoven's only serious rival both as a pianist and as a composer. Beethoven had studied with Haydn but claimed he had learned nothing from him. Certainly, his Op.18 Quartets owe little or no debt to Haydn who for his part said he could not understand and did not find them pleasing. Hummel, who had studied with Mozart, on the other hand, was not trying to break away from the Vienna Classical style pioneered by Haydn and Mozart but to build on it. Therefore, it seems unlikely that Hummel intended his Op.30 Quartets as an answer to what Beethoven had done.

Nonetheless, his **String Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op.30 No.1** is in its own way quite remarkable. The first movement begins with a slow Adagio e mesto introduction. It is pensive and reflective rather than sad. The main part of the movement, Allegro non troppo, is a leisurely and genial affair. The second movement, Menuetto, allegro assai, with downward plunging and then upward rising chromatic passages creates a memorable effect. In the beautiful, long-lined melodies of the third movement, Adagio cantabile, we can hear Mozart's voice. A playful, Haydnesque finale, Allegro vivace, finishes off this fine work.

String Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.30 No.2 opens with a series of loud chords. At first the melody is genial but then Hummel develops it more powerfully. The style here is clearly late classical. The main theme of the second movement, Andante grazioso, is rather delicate but quick and is juxtaposed against a low, long-lined accompaniment in the cello. Next comes an energetic, Menuetto, allegro con fuoco, in the style of Haydn. The striking trio section is a gorgeous Austrian ländler, set in the style of a serenade. In the first section, the first violin sings alone to the pizzicato in the other voices. Later, the second violin joins in to create an even more beautiful effect. The finale, Vivace, is filled with nervous energy and races along in an almost frantic fashion.

String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major, Op.30 No.3. The first movement, Allegro con spirito, opens with two loud crashing introductory chords, after which a chromatic, somewhat slinky melody leads to a very Haydnesque second subject which is treated at length. The movement clearly builds on the style of Mozart's six quartets dedicated to Haydn and on Haydn's Op.76 quartets. The lovely second movement, Andante, has its antecedents in Mozart's baroque style of slow movement in his Dissonant Quartet. Rather than a minuet or a scherzo, Hummel choose an Allemande, the baroque German dance form. It is a heavy, thrusting and powerful affair and nothing something to which one might typically dance rather than foot stamp, of which there are many such old German dances. It owes nothing to Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven. A true Alternativo, and not an ersatz trio section, follows. It is another type of German dance, lighter and even faster than the Allemande. The finale, a Presto, is a bumptious, exciting steeple chase in 6/8 and brings to mind some of Schubert similar finales. The first and third are the strongest in my opinion. They can be brought into the concert hall and all three can be warmly recommended to amateurs.



Engleberg Humperdinck (1854-1921) was born in the German Rhenish town of Siegburg. After receiving piano lessons, he produced his first composition at the age of seven. He studied with Ferdinand Hiller at the Cologne Conservatory and later with Franz Lachner and Josef Rheinberger at the Munich Conservatory. He became acquainted with Richard Wagner who invited him to Bayreuth, where he assisted in the production of Parsifal. He also served as music tutor to Wagner's son, Siegfried. Subsequently, he held several teaching posts in various cities, including Berlin. Most of his works were for the stage. Today, he remembered for only one piece, his opera Hansel and Gretel.

His **String Quartet in C Major** was written in 1920, the year before he died. One wonders why at sixty six and in ailing health he turned to this genre, but it is fortunate that he did for it is a wonderful work, keeping in mind that it sounds like it might have been written in 1885. That aside, this three movement quartet is a little gem. It opens with a genial *Allegro moderato*. The middle movement, *Gemachlich*, begins with a brief playful pizzicato and the whole movement is light-hearted. Here the viola is given a real chance to shine. A bouncy, syncopated *Lebhaft* which as the title suggests is lively and captivating. Good for concert or home.



William Yeates Hurlstone (1876-1906) was born in London and won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music where he studied piano and composition, the latter with Sir Charles Stanford, who among his many brilliant students considered Hurlstone his most talented. Virtually all of his contemporaries recognized his tremendous ability and the excellence of his compositions. In 1905 at the age of 28, he was appointed Professor of

Harmony and Counterpoint at the Royal College but unfortunately, less than a year later, he died.

His **Phantasie for String Quartet** by William Hurlstone won first prize in the prestigious Cobbett Competition of 1905. The Cobbett Competitions were designed to encourage the younger generation of British composers to write chamber music. Its founder and benefactor was the chamber music aficionado William Wilson Cobbett. The rules of the competition provided an alternate format, the old English Fancy for Fantasia from the time of Purcell, to the traditional four movement work which had developed from Haydn onwards. There was to be only a single movement of around 15 minutes duration embracing a variety of moods, tone colors and tempi while at the same time retaining an inner unity. His *Phantasie* is in four short movements but the whole work is built up on a few themes which appear in different forms throughout. This is a masterly and powerful piece of writing. Excellent choice for concert and also amateurs.



Anselm Hüttenbrenner (1794-1868) was born in the Austrian city of Graz, capital of the province of Steyermark, son of a wealthy land owner. He studied law and music at Graz University before moving to Vienna in 1815 for advanced studies with Antonio Salieri. It was there that he struck up a lifelong friendship with his fellow student Franz Schubert, a friendship which was particularly close

during the few short years that Hüttenbrenner remained in Vienna. Hüttenbrenner's younger brother Josef also came to Vienna and became almost slavishly devoted to Schubert, turning into a kind of butler-cum-manservant. And it is to Josef Hüttenbrenner that we owe the survival of literally hundreds of Schubert's works, mostly lieder. Anselm, in his memoirs relates, "Schubert was not attentive to his multitudinous manuscripts. Whenever friends would visit him, he would always try out new songs and if they liked them, they were allowed to take them away provided they promised to return them at some later date which happened only seldom. Schubert couldn't even remember which person had which song. My brother Josef, who had rooms in the same house, at one point finally decided to retrieve all of these loaned-out works. He succeeded in rescuing an incredible number as I discovered one day on a visit more than 100 works in one of Franz's drawers, all sorted and well-organized; something Schubert himself would never have undertaken. In fact, Schubert was so pleased with my brother's work that from then on, he turned over all of his new works to him for as long as the two lived together

under one roof." Hüttenbrenner was also a close friend of Beethoven's and at Beethoven's request, brought Schubert with him only days before he died. Today, Hüttenbrenner's name only survives because of his connection with Schubert and Beethoven. But he wrote a considerable amount of music including two string quartets. While Hüttenbrenner, surprisingly, modeled his songs on those of Beethoven, his string quartets undeniably bears a resemblance to that of Schubert. Is this because he merely copied the style of his friend? The easy answer might be yes.

However, readers will think twice after hearing Hüttenbrenner's **String Quartet No.1 in E Major, Op.3** which dates from 1816. Why—because this quartet, written the year before Schubert composed his well-known song *Death & the Maiden* and more than seven years before he composed his famous quartet known by the same name, definitely anticipates the famous slow movement from Schubert's quartet. Clearly a 'cross-pollination' of ideas had to have been taking place during the time Hüttenbrenner spent with Schubert in Vienna. They were school fellows, both students of Salieri; they spent hour upon hour with each other, talking and carousing, showing and performing their new works to each other. How could it be otherwise but that they influenced each other. Unlike Schubert, Hüttenbrenner was able to find a publisher for his *First Quartet*, Steiner of Vienna, who published it immediately after its completion. The Quartet is in four movements. The very simple, yet attractive, main theme to the *Allegretto*, which begins this work, is nothing more than an upward harmonic progression passed from voice to voice. A lovely second theme appears in the first violin. It bears an affinity to a tune and a mood that Schubert was to create in his *String Quartet No.13* in a minor. A third melody, also quite charming and sounding of Schubert, is then introduced. It must be admitted that Hüttenbrenner does not give the middle voices the chance to share in the presentation of these themes which are given to the first violin and cello, and that the accompaniment they are given is often less than exciting. However, it is also clear that Hüttenbrenner was experimenting, as Schubert was during the same period—1816, q.v. Schubert's *Qt. No.10*, with the tonal effects achieved by the massing of groups against each other, two by two. The second movement is a short *Scherzo, Allegro con spirito*. The main section is simple, straight forward and charming with the melodic material remaining in the first violin part. In the brief trio section, the cello, with the viola's help, gives out the attractive theme. It is the third movement to this quartet, *Andante con variazione* which makes both the player and listener sit up and take notice. Keep in mind, Hüttenbrenner composed his quartet in 1816, a year before Schubert wrote the music to his song *Death & the Maiden* and nearly eight years before Schubert penned his *Death & the Maiden* string quartet. Clearly, Schubert had the Hüttenbrenner *Quartet No.1* in mind as he began his own slow movement of his quartet. To be clear, while not all of the variations bears the striking similarity in rhythm and melody as the theme, it can nonetheless be seen that in more than one of the variations, Schubert, at least rhythmically, was inspired by what Hüttenbrenner had written. In the first variation Hüttenbrenner places the first violin high above the others and has it singing a syncopated theme against the opening rhythm. Schubert also uses the first violin in the same way while the middle voices beat out triplets and the cello repeats the opening rhythm. The workmanlike second variation does not have the drama or interest of the first and again shows Hüttenbrenner's fascination with the effect achieved by grouping voices 2 against 2. Schubert made no use of it. The third variation, on the other hand, with its repeated drum beat rhythm of a 16th note followed by two 32nds notes, all on the same pitch, is very similar to Schubert's fourth variation, the first section to which begins with the repeated figure of an 8th note followed by two 16ths, again all on the same pitch. Hüttenbrenner once more explores the effect of massed voices in the final variation, a somewhat plodding canon of triplets, with the

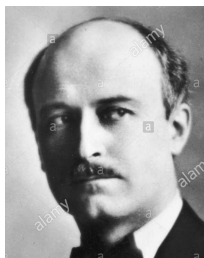
violins leading and the lower voices following. Schubert did not pattern a variation upon it, but did seem interested and one can hear a bits of it in some of Schubert's bridge passages. Unfortunately, Hüttenbrenner miscalculated placing it last. It is anticlimactic when compared to the preceding variation despite the fact that it concludes *ff*. One should not conclude from all this that Schubert "stole" Hüttenbrenner's ideas. Most likely, neither friend would have considered it any such thing. Schubert might well have replied in the way Brahms is said to have done when someone pointed out that he used a theme of Mendelssohn, "Any fool can see that, but look what I did with it" Nor am I suggesting that the two efforts are comparable. They're not. Instead, I have drawn the reader's attention to this unusual similarity to show that Schubert himself thought Hüttenbrenner had worthwhile musical ideas. The last movement to this quartet concludes with a lively Allegro. The part-writing is more equal but once again it is because Hüttenbrenner is exploring the effect of tonal groups. This is an historically interesting quartet which could be played by professionals on the same program along with Schubert's Death & the Maiden. Stylistically they are very different works. On its own, it does not belong in the concert hall, but amateurs will find it pleasing.

Hüttenbrenner's **String Quartet No.2 in c minor** dates from 1847. Hüttenbrenner's technique had not advanced much, if at all, since 1816. The violin has the lion's share of the melodic material, with the cello occasionally serving as a duet partner while the middle voices are used as a kind of tone cluster. Only in the finale do all four voices share more equally in the presentation of the thematic ideas. The first movement, begins with a Schubertian theme presented by all four voices in unison. it is repeated but not developed in any meaningful way before a second theme, a very pretty melody, is brought forth. Again, it has the unmistakable sound of Schubert. In the Scherzo, *Vivace ma non troppo*, which comes next, Hüttenbrenner resorts to his formula of a semi-unison opening, with the first violin alone taking the second theme and then the cello being allowed to briefly reply to it. The charming opening theme to the following Andantino is redolent of Schubert about the time he was writing his Quartet No.3 (1812). Sung entirely by the 1st violin, it could just as easily have been a solo as the others voices have no melodic part. The choice of a theme for the finale, *Allegretto*, while not bad, is not quite up to the standard of some of his others. But the part-writing is much better than in the preceding movements. There is nothing in the Second Quartet which would merit performance by a professional group, but it can be recommended to amateurs as it is a pleasure to play.

Oscar Hylén (1846-1886) was born in Stockholm where he entered the Royal Swedish Conservatory. Among his several teachers was the fairly well-known composer Franz Berwald from whom he studied composition. Several of his early works were performed with success shortly after he graduated.

Among these was his **String Quartet in D Major** which dates from 1870. Although these works were well received he had difficulty making a reputation for himself. Besides composing, he pursued a career as a teacher and conductor of a Swedish touring orchestra. The Quartet was published twice, first in the early 1870's and then again around 1900 but each time it disappeared. It was rediscovered in the 1960's and had a brief moment of revival before disappearing yet again. In four movements, the energetic first movement, *Allegro*, begins with a bang and then races forward with great élan. A lovely *Andante* of vocal quality comes next. the third movement is a *Scherzo allegro* with finely contrasting trio. A dance-like finale, *Molto allegro, quasi presto*, concludes the quartet. Although strong enough to stand on its own merits without considering whether it is historically important, the fact is that it is historically important because there were very few Swedish string quartets composed before 1870 and this one

serves as a good example of musical developments in Sweden at that time make it a candidate for the concert hall. But it can also be recommended to amateurs.



Jacques Ibert (1890-1962) was born in Paris. He attended the Paris Conservatory and pursued a career as a composer, conductor and administrator. Little known outside of France, there he was known for his operas and ballets.

His **String Quartet** was begun in 1937, and written over a period of five years, being completed in 1942. The first movement, *Allegro risoluto*, resembles a kind of modern divertimento or divertissement as the French might style it. It is upbeat and playful. It bears some resemblance to Milhaud, perhaps not an accident as they were fellow students. The second movement, *Andante assai*, resembles a funereal plaint. A brief *Scherzo* comes next, using *pizzicato* from start to finish, recalls what Ravel did, but tonally this sounds nothing like that. It is rougher and searching. The *Finale, Allegro marcato*, begins in pounding fashion, at first sounding grim, but quickly turning more upbeat. There are tonally pleasing episodes mixed with occasional harsh dissonances. All in all, it is the movement which makes the strongest impression. The quartet is well put together, it can be brought into the concert hall but I do not think it is going to win a permanent place in anyone's repertoire. Experienced amateurs can manage it.



Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931) was born of aristocratic stock. His musical talent was recognized by his grandmother who raised him and saw that he received piano lessons from famous teachers. Despite this, he was sent to law school in Paris. Instead, D'Indy, who was intent on becoming a composer, joined a Parisian orchestra as a timpanist to learn music "from the ground up." Both Massenet and Bizet were im-

pressed by his early compositions and encouraged him to show his work to César Franck. Franck did not share their enthusiasm and was reputed to have told D'Indy, "You have ideas but you cannot do anything." Apparently those ideas were enough, however, to convince Franck to show D'Indy how to do things, as he took the latter on as a pupil. Though D'Indy was to assimilate and be influenced by many different sources, Franck and his music left the most telling mark on him. D'Indy's reputation, during his own lifetime was considerable, having founded, in 1900, what was to become the most important music school in France after the Paris Conservatory—The Schola Cantorum.

His **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.35**, was composed in 1890 and was for its time considered very forward looking and original. When premiered, it was hailed as a masterpiece. Fellow composer Ernest Chausson wrote to D'Indy, "all France honors you." The Quartet shows the influence of Beethoven and his teacher Cesar Franck. The use of a tonal motto reminds one of Franck, while the technique of using small phrases which are full of possibilities is reminiscent of Beethoven. All four movements begin slowly. The opening movement, *Lent et soutenu, Modérément animé*, gives out the motto in several forms and it becomes the kernel for all of the themes in the movement as well as the coda. The slow second movement, *Lente et calme*, is poetic in its conception. The third movement, *Assez Modéré*, begins like an intermezzo but gives way to an atmospheric and modern sounding scherzo. The finale, *Assez lent-Vif*, after its slow introduction, leads to a series of jaunty themes almost neo-classical in style. I must admit, I do not share the high opinion of this work that contemporaries had. It is interesting, well-written but lacks that certain something which might have catapulted it into the standard repertoire. It certainly is not a masterpiece.

String Quartet No.2 in E Major, Op.45 appeared in 1897 and is perhaps a tribute to d'Indy's teacher César Franck. He uses the same cyclical method used by Franck in his own string quartet. More surprisingly, however, is the fact that all of the material stems from a light four note motto given out at the beginning of the work. After a slow introduction, the first movement, *Lentement-Animé*, the main theme, a lovely and lyrical melody is presented first by the cello and then by all. The second theme is dominated by its rhythm and downward chromaticism. The second movement, *Très animé* is an upbeat scherzo and is dominated by its brisk rhythm. The rhythms from the first subject is carried over as an accompaniment to the mystical second subject. In the slow movement, *Très lent*, the motto is not immediately recognizable as it is expertly covered by a lovely chordal chorale of great breadth and feeling. The finale, *Lentement-Très vif*, has a brief slow introduction consisting of the motto, before the triumphant main theme slowly comes forth. Several other ingenious subjects follow. This is a work of great imagination and originality. It deserves a place in the concert hall and amateurs will also find it a great work to play.

String Quartet No.3 in D flat Major, Op.96 dates from 1929. Much had changed since 1897 and it not surprising that this work does not sound much like his earlier efforts. The opening movement, *Entree en sonate*; *Lentement* is morose. I would not style the *Intermede*, *Assez joyeux* as joyous. It is more lively but not particularly upbeat. The third movement, *Theme varie* *Assez lent*, has a theme which is rather like a dirge. The variations are more interesting. The concluding *Final en rondeau*: *Lentement*, *Anime* is autumnal. Not much here which deserves your time.



Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov (1859-1935) was born in the town of Gatchina, near St. Petersburg. He studied composition with Rimsky-Korsakov at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After graduating, he obtained the position of Director of the Tiflis (Tbilisi) Music Academy. He spent the next seven years in the Georgian capital, also holding the post of conductor of the city's orchestra. It was during this time that he developed his life-long interest in the

music of the Georgian region and many of his compositions reflect this, the most famous being his *Caucasian Sketches*. In 1893, he became a professor at the Moscow Conservatory and later served as its director for two decades.

His **String Quartet in a minor, Op.13** was completed in 1896. The opening movement might well have been a tribute to Tchaikovsky and certainly shows that composer's influence. It begins with a substantial *Lento* introduction, somewhat sad and searching. It leads to the main part of the movement, a restless *Allegro*. The second theme in which the first violin and viola bring forth a lengthy melody over a moving line in the second and pizzicato in the cello, is striking and effective. Next comes a nervous *Humoresque-scherzando*. The third movement is a lovely *Intermezzo*, *allegro grazioso*. Here, the cello pizzicato backdrop serves as guitar-like accompaniment to attractive melody in the upper voices. The finale is a thrusting and energetic *Allegro risoluto*. It has its moments and might be recommended to amateurs.



John Ireland (1879-1963) was born in Bowdon, near Manchester, England. Ireland entered the newly-established Royal College of Music in London at the age of fourteen, lost both his parents shortly after, and had to make his own way as an orphaned teenager, studying piano, organ and composition. The last was under Sir Charles Stanford. Because Ireland was schooled upon the 19th Century romantics,

it should not surprise one to hear the influence of Brahms, Dvorak and to a lesser extent, Schumann, Mendelssohn and Beethoven in his early works. As he matured his style changed, especially after he discovered an affinity with Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky and even Bartok. Ireland destroyed almost all his early works which were written while he was still fairly young. He did spare a few of those he felt better than the others, but did not consent to their publication until the very end of his life. Among these are his two string quartets published in 1973.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor probably dates from 1895 although the score attributes it to March 1897. The second quartet, was dated September of 1897. But, the leap in compositional maturity between the first and second quartet is too great to have been made in 6 months, which leads me to believe this first quartet was composed in 1895. Although not of the same standard as the second, it was praised by his teachers which is perhaps why it escaped destruction. It is not really a student work, the part-writing is very fine and the musical language is surprisingly mature for a 16 years old. It's too bad Brahms couldn't have heard it, he would almost certainly have been amazed and surely flattered. The opening *Allegro* is nearly as long as the other three movements. The powerful themes are long, spacious and leisurely developed. The second movement, *Molto allegro*, combines restless Brahmsian rhythms with Mendelssohnian melody. Although the trio does not provide much contrast, this is still a fetching movement. Next comes an *Andante moderato*, reflective and elegiac, but not sad. The thematic material begins with a direct quote from the opening measures of the *Andante moderato* of Brahms's 2nd Quartet, Op.51 No.2. Here, Ireland falls far short of the master as his themes do not entirely hold one's attention. The finale, *Vivace*, begins with a bright and more English-sounding rondo. The second theme does not have the same energy and initially isn't presented very interestingly although much better use of it is made later. In sum, first two movements are of a high caliber but the slow movement is rather prosaic and the finale is perhaps a little uneven, although it also has flashes of excellence. Not for concert, but certainly amateurs should consider it.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor is a massive work, lasting some three quarters of an hour. The opening *Allegro moderato* is composed on a big canvas. The captivating first theme, presented by the 2nd Violin, is at one and the same time of great breath and quite lyrical. The melodic influence of Dvorak can be heard. The development of this theme shows a more modern sounding touch than Dvorak ever put into his quartets. The mastery of the string writing and quartet style really quite impressive as Ireland at 18 seems quite aware of how contemporary, late Romantic composers were tonally moving beyond Brahms. One can hear in the music similarities that one finds in Dohnanyi, Stenhammar and Zemlinsky, whose works with which he could not have been familiar. Ireland gave the second movement the subtitle *Nocturne*. It is a tender *Andante* and has an American flavor, showing some resemblance to what Aaron Copeland later wrote. The attractive second theme introduces an *intermezzo* section. This is followed up by a muscular and original sounding *Scherzo*, *Presto* The trio section provides a fine contrast to the powerful, forward-thrusting *scherzo*. Here, a lovely melody is entrusted to the cello in its tenor register. The other voices join in before the cello once again is given the lead in a short development which then flows into to the recapitulation. The finale, *Poco allegro*, begins with a dark and moody theme from which Ireland creates one of grandest sets of variations imaginable. running the complete spectrum of moods, from pastoral to stormy, from languid to a very energetic cannon. Each instrument is given a chance to lead, there are also variations using different instrumental combinations, including an especially telling duet for the 1st violin and cello. After the 11th variation, Ireland brings this tour d'force to a close with a fiery coda. This is an altogether first rate quartet, a youthful masterpiece, if you will. The somewhat derivative nature of the first

quartet is gone. Here the music is entirely fresh and convincing. It belongs in the concert hall, yet makes no extraordinary technical demands and can also be enjoyed by amateurs.



Andres Isasi (1890-1940) was born in the Spanish Basque city of Bilbao. After studying there, he went to Berlin where he studied with Engelberg Humperdinck. He remained in Berlin for five years and many of his works were premiered there. Although he returned to Spain where he remained for the rest of his life, he was better known in Germany. He wrote six string quartets.

The first is actually titled **String Quartet 0 in e minor, Op.83** dating from 1908. The opening and appealing *Allegro moderato ed espresso* combines German Romanticism with Spanish rhythm. The *Molto lento* which comes next is a lyrical *Molto lento*. In the *Berceuse* which follows, again we hear Spanish melody and rhythm. The finale, *Un poco andante, allegro*, begins in pleading fashion and is followed by a nervous, frantic main section full of forward drive. This is a very appealing work which could be brought to the concert hall and recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.11 was composed in 1911. The opening *Allegro moderatissimo* is genial and tonally a little more advanced than No.0. The second movement, *Andante e romantico*, wanders about and the thematic material is amorphous. Next is an *Intermezzo, allegretto*, sounding of French impressionism with some bizarre rhythmic episodes. The finale, *Allegro*, also has theme with no center to it. One would not guess that this was written by the same composer as the previous work. He clearly was trying to break loose from the influence of German Romanticism but what he replaces it with is neither hide nor hair. I cannot recommend this for concert or home.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op.27 dates from 1920. It begins *Allegro agitato*, restless but interesting. The *Adagio* which follows is downtrodden, a combination of lyricism and mystery but not so interesting. *Intermezzo, allegretto giocoso* which is next is neither jocular or much of an *intermezzo*. The finale, *Allegro moderato*, is upbeat with thematic material which is effective. The dissonances which he throws in gratuitously seem out of place, but this is without doubt the best movement. If the rest of the quartet were of this quality, I could have recommended it.

String Quartet No.3 in e minor, Op.30 was composed shortly after No.2 in 1921. It was unfinished, only the first three movements were completed, although it was published. I have not played it, but only heard it. The opening movement has no tempo marking, but it begins in either *Lento* or *Adagio* fashion with a gripping introduction which leads to a quicker section which is restless but brings many tempo changes. The second movement, *Scherzo*, is playful and interesting. The opening notes low in the register of the cello of *Adagio molto espresso* are quite ominous but what follows is a lovely and very romantic melody, almost harking back to his first quartet. But eventually it is interrupted by a brief unrelated harsh episode, as if an intruder suddenly entered a party.

String Quartet No.4 in D Major, Op.31 was also composed in 1921, apparently immediately after No.3 which perhaps he put aside. The first movement, *Allegro grazioso*, does in fact sound graceful, at least in the beginning. Eventually, it moves into a sad and wandering plateau not at all interesting. The *Romanze* which follows has a short funereal introduction before a mixture of sweet and dissonant music follows. It leaves no impression. The third movement, *Scherzo*, moves along with some verve, the thematic material makes a good impression and holds one's attention. The finale, *Rondo*, is a kind of updated peasant dance. It begins in promising fashion but soon like so many other movements goes onto thematic territory which leaves no indelible im-

pression. There are parts of this quartet which make me think it might be presented in concert but overall, I think not.

String Quartet No.5 in c minor, Op.32 was also composed in 1921 and judging from the opus number immediately after No.4. The opening *Allegro non troppo* starts off as a ponderous, pounding march but later quiets down into a kind of French impressionist affair. Not at all a bad movement. The *Adagio* which follows is workmanlike but I cannot say it left any kind of impression. The *Allegretto vivace* which comes next is a kind of scherzo and is rather good. So good that it stands out from the other movements. The finale, *Allegro*, has some exciting movements mixed with rather lax, flaccid episodes. This work, despite its warts, could be brought into concert and played by experienced amateurs. Isasi's quartets are problematic. He has many good ideas, some fresh and original, which all too often are spoiled long stretches of forgettable writing.



Charles Ives (1874-1954) was born in Danbury, Connecticut. His father, a band leader, was his first teacher of composition, teaching him theory and organ as well. It was also from his father that he discovered the music of Stephen Foster and New England church songs, which were to figure so prominently in much of his music. Ives later studied with the American composer Horatio Parker at Yale University. Throughout this time, he served as a church

organist. After graduation, he worked as an executive in the insurance industry and was a prominent figure within it. He composed in his spare time.

Ives' **String Quartet No.1**, subtitled *From the Salvation Army* was written while he was still at Yale. It was originally composed for organ and string quartet. Its four movements are subtitled as a typical Lutheran organist's service and the thematic material come from Lutheran church hymns. The first movement, *Chorale an Andante con moto* is a fugue based on the hymn *Coronation*. It is followed by *Prelude*, an *Allegro* based on the themes *Beulah Land* and *Shining Shore*. In third place is *Offertory* an *Adagio cantabile* based on the hymn *Nettleton*. The finale, *Postlude, Allegro marziale* uses *Coronation*, *Stand Up for Jesus* and *Shining Shore* for its thematic material. The theme does not directly quote it but breaks it apart, extracting bits and pieces and infusing them with fragmentary traces of the hymns. At times, he turns the themes upside down or combines two hymns. As if to drive the point home, the final movement ends with an *Amen* cadence. This is an impressive work, not heard often enough in concert. Tame by the standard of Ives' later works, it can be recommended to amateurs.

Ives wrote his **String Quartet No.2** between 1907 and 1913. According to Ives, he wrote it as a reaction against the conservative music establishment which only wanted to hear and perform beautiful music. It is a dissonant work, harsh and ahead of its time. No one could call it beautiful. It is also a difficult work to perform. In the middle of much dissonance, Ives' throws in brief snippets of such songs as *Columbian the gem of the ocean*, *Dixie Land*, *Turkey in the straw*, *Massa in the cold, cold ground*, the fourth movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No.9*, and the first movement of Brahms' *Symphony No.1*. None of these do anything to alleviate the unrelenting tonal harshness of the music. This is not a work which is going to be to many people's taste. A thorny and very difficult work, well beyond amateurs and many professional groups as well.

Frederick Jacobi (1891-1952) was born in San Francisco. Of independent means he studied with several important composers in New York, Paris and Berlin, including Ernest Bloch, Ruben Goldmark and Paul Juon. He devoted himself to composition and taught at the Juilliard School of Music.



He composed three string quartets. **String Quartet No.1**, subtitled on Indian Themes, dates from the early 1920s. He is said to have lived with the Pueblo Indians of Arizona and presumably the themes in the quartet are from them. It was about this time that he became interested, along with Charles Cadman and Arthur Farwell and became part of the so-called American Indianist movement. I am embarrassed to admit that I have played this quartet twice and cannot remember anything about it. It left no impression other than the fact that I did not think it sounded like the Indian music one heard on television from cowboy shows, which probably were not Indian at all. Anyway, it is in three movements. The first, *Allegro agitato*, alternates between 4/4 and 2/4 throughout, with occasional lapses into 3/4. For much of the time, it is characterized by pounding triplets. Perhaps war drums. The second movement, *Lento non troppo*, changes meter from 2/4 to 3/4 regularly and also features triplets. The third movement serves as both a scherzo and finale. One finds the constant meter changes again in the *Presto agitato* which serves as a the scherzo, as well as in the *Allegro barbaro* which features pounding doublets. This is a difficult and not particularly gratifying work to play. I am not familiar with his *String Quartet No.2* from 1933 which seems to have disappeared like a stone thrown into a pond. Only his final effort from 1945,

String Quartet No.3, seems to have gained any traction, though one could hardly call it popular. The opening movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, begins with a brief astringent introduction which gives way to a lovely melody. This in turn is developed in a mostly traditionally tonal fashion. The second subject is a turbulent and heavily chromatic downward plunging theme. Quite effective and a good movement. Next is an *Andante espressivo*, much slower, of course, but also featuring downward, chromatic passages as themes. The music sounds as if something is about to happen, like in a scary movie. Much use is made of tremolo. The third movement, *Scherzo presto*, is a nervous, muted, restless and full of forward motion. The finale, *Allegro non troppo*, begins in a harsh, questioning fashion, again with downward passages, this time in triplets. There is a pleading subject which appears over a soft quivering tremolo leading to a powerful climax. This quartet could be brought into concert successfully. It is interesting and original sounding, but not for amateurs.



Salomon Jadassohn (1831-1902) was born to a Jewish family living in Breslau, the capital of the Prussian province of Silesia. First educated locally, Jadassohn enrolled at the Leipzig Conservatory in 1848, just a few years after it had been founded by Mendelssohn. There he studied composition with Moritz Hauptmann, Ernst Richter and Julius Rietz as well as piano with Ignaz Moscheles. At the same time, he studied privately with Franz Liszt in Weimar. He spent

much of his career teaching piano and composition at the Leipzig Conservatory and along with Carl Reinecke, Joseph Rheinberger and Friedrich Kiel must be considered one of the most important teachers of the 19th century. Among his students were Grieg, Busoni, Delius, Karg-Elert, Reznicek and Weingartner. Jadassohn wrote over 140 works in virtually every genre. Considered a master of counterpoint and harmony, he was also a gifted melo-dist, following in the tradition of Mendelssohn. But one also hears the influence of Wagner and Liszt, whose music deeply impressed him. Jadassohn and his music were not better known primarily for two reasons: The first being Carl Reinecke and the second being the rising tide of anti-Semitism in late 19th century Wilhemine Germany. Reinecke was almost Jadassohn's exact contemporary and somewhat of a super-star. Not only was he a world famous piano virtuoso but also an important professor at

the Leipzig Conservatory and later its director. If this were not enough, he served as the conductor of the renowned Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Under these circumstances, it was hard for a colleague to get the public's attention.

Jadassohn's **String Quartet in c minor, Op.10**, his only work for this ensemble, dates from 1858 from his early period. Like most graduates of the Leipzig Conservatory from this era, the composer's work shows the influence of Mendelssohn, whose reputation then was at its very highest point. The opening movement, *Allegro molto ed appassionato*, is at once both dramatic and lyrical. The second movement, *Adagio* is based on a simple folk melody but given a lovely treatment. It is in the very effective *Un poco Allegretto*, the third movement which serves as a kind of scherzo, that the spirit of Mendelssohn hovers. A rousing finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, brings the well-done mid-romantic era work to a close. While no masterpiece, this is nonetheless, a very good work, especially considering Jadassohn was all of seventeen years old. Good for amateurs.



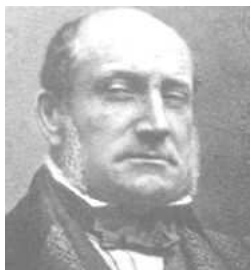
Hyacinthe Jadin (1776-1800) was born in Versailles where his father was a musician in the Royal Orchestra. He was one of five musically gifted brothers, the most famous of which was Louis-Emmanuel Jadin. His first lessons were from his father and Louis Emmanuel who was four years his senior. Later he was sent to Paris where he studied with Hüllmandel, who had been a student of

C.P.E. Bach. The French Revolution put an end to his studies as his teacher fled France. He eked out a living as a pianist and briefly taught at the Paris Conservatory. Because of his early death, he did not achieve the same fame as Louis-Emmanuel but the famous music critic Fetis wrote that his chamber music was of a very high standard and deserved to be better known. He wrote a total of twelve string quartets in four sets, each containing three quartets. The **Op.1 string quartets**, which were dedicated to Haydn, were composed in 1795 and published shortly thereafter. At that time, and up until 1814, there were no public chamber music concerts in France. Chamber music was exclusively and privately performed at the palaces and homes of the wealthy and the kind of string quartets then in vogue were the so called *quatuors brillants* of Rudolfe Kreutzer and Pierre Rode, which were essentially a showcase for the first violin. Jadin's Op.1 quartets are not *quatuors brillants*, but closer to the style of Haydn to whom they were dedicated. Further, while they represent a French version of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, they also anticipate the stylistic developments of the kind made by Schubert in the early 19th century.

String Quartet No.3 in f minor, Op.1 No.3, the third quartet of the set, is perhaps the most striking because of its unusual Menuet and its finale, a Polacca and its fine treatment of the cello which was very rare for the time, especially in France. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins with an brooding theme in the first violin. The second theme is an interesting conversation between the first violin and the cello. The second movement, though marked Menuet, is really something else altogether, and certainly not a dance, with its slow, haunting unisono melody doubled and played in octaves. It is only in the trio section that we hear a more traditional rendering. A dignified *Adagio* with a long-lined main theme and interesting contrapuntal treatment comes next. The finale is a brilliantly scored Polacca which holds the listener's attention from start to finish. This quartet, certainly for its historical importance as to what was happening in France at the time, could be brought into concert. The other two quartets, while perhaps not as striking as the third, are nonetheless works with many attractive features and well-worth playing and can be recommended to amateurs.

I will only briefly mention two as representative of the second and third set. **String Quartet No.4 in E flat Major, Op.2 No.1** The chromaticism and style of opening bars to the Largo-Allegro moderato is so similar to Mozart's Dissonant K.465, one can but wonder if Jadin was paraphrasing. This is not true of the faster section where the writing is assured and more individual sounding. The beautiful second movement, Adagio, opens with a lovely chanson given to the cello. The tonalities are very fresh and original throughout this striking movement. The concluding Menuetto and Finale allegro are both good movements.

String Quartet No.7 in C Major, Op.3 No.1 shows the unmistakable influence of Haydn. Jadin demonstrates in this four movement work that he had assimilated the advances it took Haydn a lifetime to make. While the voices are by no means equal, nonetheless, Jadin understands the other voices can be used for more than just accompaniment. This is a nice work, well written, if not particularly memorable.



Louis Emmanuel Jadin (1768-1853), an older brother of Hyacinthe, was also born in Versailles. Though better known during his lifetime than his younger brother, he is now all but forgotten while it is recognized that Hyacinthe was the superior composer. Between 1796 and 1816, he taught at the Paris Conservatory. By 1820 he had retired (though he lived for another 33 years) and for the most part stopped

composing. During the last decade of the 18th and first two decades of the 19th century, he was one of France's leading musicians, highly regarded as a violinist, pianist and as an composer. Jadin wrote a considerable amount of music, including some nine string quartets. The fact that he wrote string quartets, in and of itself, sets him apart from most of his French contemporaries who, much like the French musical public, were not, at the time, very interested in chamber music. Six were from 1787 dedicated to a French count, head of a unit of Dragoons. A second set of three were published in 1814 dedicated to the King of Prussia who at the time was Friedrich Wilhelm III and not the cello playing Friedrich Wilhelm II who died in 1797. Friedrich Wilhelm III could only play the organ, not the cello. So either these quartets were either composed before 1797 or else not intended for a cello playing king.

I am only familiar with his **String Quartet in f minor**, the second quartet of the set dedicated to the King of Prussia. An examination of the quartet makes clear that this work was not for a cello playing king, unless it was one with extraordinarily modest technical attainment. While he had advanced beyond the kind of melodic writing of the Mannheim School, he had not yet assimilated the harmonic changes pioneered by Haydn and Mozart. Hence, for the most part, the first violin has all of the thematic material, while the other voices provide an accompaniment. The quartet combines the older 18th century style with the more dramatic melodic writing of the early romantic period. The first movement, Maestoso moderato, is an excellent example of this synthesis, with its lovely melodies but still wedded to the older structural format. The second movement is a classical Minuetto of moderate tempo, stately and somewhat sad. Here, however, Jadin does something almost unheard of, he writes the music in what amounts to 10/4 time. The trio is a lovely, country dance. The third movement, Andante moderato, is a subdued French song in three parts. The finale, Allegro non troppo, shares many of the same features as the opening movement, notably its pleasant and sometimes dramatic melodies. The melodies are appealing but the other parts have no interest, so I can only recommend this to amateurs who have a good first violinist and nothing else.



Marie Jaell (1846-1925) nee Trautmann was born in the Alsatian city of Steinseitz, a German speaking village of which her father was mayor. A piano prodigy, she studied with many famous virtuosi including Ignaz Moscheles, Henry Herz, and Franz Liszt. She studied composition with Cesar Franck and Camille Saint Saëns. Most of her works were for piano.

Her **String Quartet in g minor**, her only work in this genre, dates from 1875. The opening Allegro is fugal in nature, a cross between Bach and Busoni. It is well-written but not compelling and goes on rather too long for the thematic material hence making it sound monotonous. The second movement, Andante cantabile is lyrical and romantic, perhaps overly sweet, but not to be despised. Next is an energetic Scherzo, well-written but sounding like many another work of its sort. The trio section, however, provides a fine contrast. The finale, Allegro, has the most memorable thematic material and is the most successful of the work. The final judgment is of a composer who could write well, but most of whose material was not particularly memorable. Would the fact that it was written by a then famous musician at a time when not many women composers were writing string quartets, be enough to justify bringing it into the concert hall? I think not, although amateurs might get some pleasure from it.

Very little information is available about the Austro-Hungarian composer who was generally known by his German name **Eugen von Jambor (1853-1914)**. His name also appears, though less often, in the Hungarian form Jenő Jambor and the French form as Eugene Jambor. He studied at organ, violin, piano and composition, the latter with Robert Volkmann at the Budapest Conservatory. He then continued his studies in Vienna where he took degrees in law and philosophy. Besides playing in the Hungarian National Theater Orchestra and Budapest Philharmonic, he also taught at the Budapest Conservatory. He was primarily known for his art songs, but his works for violin and piano and cello and piano as well as his chamber music were often performed.

His **String Quartet in g minor, Op.55** dates from 1898 and was for a time in the repertoire of the famous Budapest String Quartet founded by the well-known violin virtuoso Jenő Hubay and the famous cellist David Popper. The opening movement, Allegro con brio, begins with two "Mannheim Rockets", an explosive, ascending passage creating considerable excitement. This was a technique of which his teacher Volkmann was particularly fond and which he used to begin his sixth quartet. The main theme is full of yearning and forward motion. The second movement, Lento e mesto, is somber and plaint-like march, perhaps funereal. Next comes a lively, syncopated Allegro scherzando, giving the impression of a bumpy horse ride. The finale, Allegro moderato, is appealing Hungarian rondo. This is a first rate work, good for concert and warmly recommended to amateurs.



Leos Janacek (1854-1928) was born in the Moravian town of Hukvaldy, then part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire, now in the Czech Republic. Along with Dvorak and Smetana, he is one of the best known Czech composers. He studied piano, organ and composition at the Prague Organ School, the Leipzig Conservatory and finally at the Vienna Conservatory. He spent the rest of his life teaching and composing. He served as the director of the Brno Organ School, which later became the Brno Conservatory. He did not write a great deal of chamber music, however, his two string quartets are generally considered his most important works.

String Quartet No.1 subtitled the Kreutzer Sonata. It dates from 1923 and was composed with a period of two weeks. It was inspired by Tolstoy's Novella of that name in which one of the main characters a violinist plays Beethoven's Violin Sonata No.9 known as the Kreutzer as it was dedicated to the French virtuoso violinist Rodolfo Kreutzer. In the novella, a jealous husband introduces his wife to a violinist friend with whom she plays the sonata and has an affair which the husband discovers and kills her. Janacek felt deeply for the tragedy of the wife and attempts to bring his feelings into the music but not by actually trying to retell the story. Instead, he uses several varied effects such as sul ponticello playing, dissonance, forceful accentuation, and extreme dynamics to convey the emotional nature of the story. The music can be played but not sight read by experienced amateurs. Everyone needs to study their part and perhaps listen to a recording before sitting down together and trying to put it together.

String Quartet No.2, subtitled Intimate Letters, dates from 1928, the year of his death. It is a deeply personal work attempting to convey his great passion for a woman nearly 40 years younger than him. Though she did not outright reject his overtures, her feelings toward him were not reciprocal and she never signed her letters using her first name despite the fact that he begged her to do so until the very end of his life. Over a period of many years, he wrote more than 700 letters to her, his were intimate, hers not. In this quartet, the viola throughout assumes the role of the woman he loves. This is a quartet designed for professionals. It was commissioned by the famous Bohemian Quartet. Amateurs, unless they are of a professional standard, should give this work a miss. And, like the first work, this quartet requires considerable study before attempting to sight read.



Leopold Jansa (1795-1875) in the village of Wildenschwert in Bohemia, then part of the Habsburg Empire. (now known as: Ústí nad Orlicí in the Czech Republic), He took violin lessons as a child in his home town but was largely self-taught which was surprising as he was later regarded, along with Joseph Mayseder and Carl Bohm as one Vienna's leading violinists. In Vienna he studied law but also studied composition

with Václav Voříšek and Emanuel Förster. He was eventually appointed Imperial Court Virtuoso and became a professor of Violin at the University of Vienna and the Vienna Conservatory. From 1834 to 1850, he participated in various string quartets. He took over from Ignaz Schuppanzigh as lead violin in the Schuppanzigh Quartet, Vienna's most famous quartet, which had been responsible for premiering most of Beethoven's quartets. He wrote a considerable amount of chamber music including 13 string quartets. His style is that of the Vienna Romantic movement. He lost his positions in Vienna as a result of his participation in a London concert in aid of the wounded who had fought for Hungarian independence in the Revolution of 1848. As a result, he was barred from returning to the Austrian Empire. Well regarded in London, he choose to remain there for two decades, until he was finally pardoned in 1868, working as a soloist and violin teacher. Among his students were Wilma Neruda, (Lady Hallé), and Karl Goldmark. Some of his violin works still receive occasional performance but his chamber music has disappeared. I have only played one of his quartets.

String Quartet No.6 in C Major, Op.51 No.1 was composed in 1836. It was the first of a set of three designed for amateur market of Vienna and beyond and hence presented no technical challenges. The opening Allegro is genial with a certain grace that was typical of the chamber music being composed in Biedermeier Vienna at the time. The second movement, Scherzo, though in the usual 3/4 time makes an impression because of its emphasis on beat 2 as a kind of after beat. The short trio section pro-

vides a nice contrast. A lovely Andante follows. The finale, Allegro, is a toe-tapping rondo. This is a good choice for amateurs looking for a work to present in concert.

It is his **String Quartet No.10 in a minor, Op.65 No.1**. It dates from 1844 and is the first of a set of three. In four movements, the opening Allegro moderato begins with a fetching melody passed from voice to voice. The extensive development section leads to an energetic second subject, Next comes a Scherzo vivace with a heavily accented main subject which moves along with considerable thrust. A calmer and contrasting trio section follows. The third movement is a deeply felt Adagio un poco andante, The finale, Allegro con fuoco, is full of exciting episodes. Jansa, as a quartet leader, knew how to write for this genre and judging from this quartet, could write very effective works. More importantly, his quartet, unlike so many of those coming out of Germany at the time, owes nothing to Mendelssohn but instead shows what the Viennese were doing. It could be presented in concert and certainly can be recommended to amateurs.



Gustav Jenner (1865-1920) was Brahms' only full-time composition student. Jenner, who was born in the town of Keitum on the German island of Sylt, was the son of a doctor who was of Scottish ancestry and a descendant of the famous physician Edward Jenner, pioneer of the vaccination for smallpox. On his mother's side, he descended from Sylt fishermen. Jenner began to teach himself music and attracted the attention of his teachers in Kiel who sent him to

study in Hamburg with Brahms' own teacher, Eduard Marxsen. Eventually, Jenner's friends and mentors in Kiel arranged for the penniless young man to study with Brahms in Vienna, which he did from 1888-95. Jenner in his biography of Brahms (Brahms, The Man, The Teacher and The Artist) writes that although Brahms was a merciless critic of Jenner's efforts, he took considerable pains over Jenner's welfare, eventually recommending him for the position of Music Director at the University of Marburg. Jenner held this post from 1895 until his death. Jenner, no doubt due in part to the training he had under the ultra critical Brahms, was highly critical of his own works and took care to see that only a few were published during his lifetime. These were mostly songs and his Trio for Piano, Clarinet and Horn (1900). Given the fact that few German composers of Brahms' time, none of whom were his students, escaped the great man's influence, it would be unreasonable to expect that someone who studied with Brahms for as long as Jenner did could have done so. Although Jenner writes with great originality and one finds many ideas which Brahms would never have thought of, nonetheless Brahms' influence is often felt in Jenner's music. He wrote three string quartets, none of which were published during his lifetime.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor, was composed in 1907. There is little if anything of Brahms to be found in this quartet. The opening Allegro is way too long, too diffuse and thematically verbose. The thematic material of the second movement, Andante espressivo, leaves little impression. The Allegretto grazioso which comes next is much better. The main subject is interesting and well executed. The second is also good. The finale, Allegro, has a very slight Hungarian tinge to it but Jenner does not make much of it. Many of the faults of the opening movement can be found here as well. I would not recommend this for concert nor for amateurs given the many difficulties it presents.

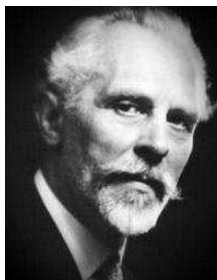
String Quartet No.2 in G Major dates from 1910. It begins with an Allegro which attempts at a mood of geniality but sounds rather contrived and leaves no impression. The second movement, Allegro energico, is a thrusting scherzo. Much better than the first movement with a nicely contrasting trio section. Next comes an Adagio-Presto. The Adagio is well conceived and effective, however, the sudden Presto outbursts seem out of place.

The finale, *Allegro giocoso*, aims at being a relative to Beethoven. This, too, is a decent movement although it sounds rather like it was composed in 1840 or even earlier and not 1910. Not for the concert hall but it can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in F Major came the following year in 1911. The opening *Allegro* with the exception of a few brief moments is unmemorable and sounds like it was pasted together and not all of a whole. Next comes an *Adagio*, *Tema con variazioni*. The theme is sweet but rather ordinary. The variations in some cases are better. This is followed by an *Allegro appassionato*, is clearly meant to be Hungarian and it is very nicely done. The finale, *Vivace*, starts off well enough with a bouncy *spiccato* episode. What follows is less successful. Again, this is not work I would recommend bringing into the concert hall. Amateurs might want to give it a look, however.

Gustav Jensen (1843-1895) was born in the Prussian town of Königsberg. He studied composition with Siegfried Dehn and violin with Joseph Joachim and Ferdinand Laub at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. He subsequently pursued a career as a composer, performer and teacher, becoming a professor at the Cologne Conservatory. Jensen was not only an excellent violinist but also a fine violist often performing on that instrument in chamber music concerts.

His **String Quartet in d minor, Op.11** dates from 1881. The problem with the opening *Moderato un poco sostenuto*. *Allegro poco vivace* is that the *Moderato* goes on for too long, does not build tension or any expectation of the coming *Allegro*, which is probably just as well since it sounds ordinary without any real memorable themes. The second movement, *Adagio molto espressivo* suffers from the same problem as so many pieces from this, the mid-late romantic era in that it sounds like so many other similar works without leaving any real impression. It is followed by an *Allegro poco agitato* which is more interesting and effective. The finale, *Allegro molto agitato*, makes no real impression. It is a well written work but it does not stand out in any way which makes it even worth the time of amateurs.



Joseph Jongen (1873-1953), on the strength of an amazing precocity for music, entered the Liege Conservatory in Belgium at the extraordinarily young age of seven, and there he spent the next sixteen years. The admissions board was not disappointed. Jongen won a First Prize for Fugue in 1891, an honors diploma in piano the next year and another for organ in 1896. In 1897, he won the prestigious Grande Prix de Rome

which allowed him to travel to Italy, Germany and France. He began composing at the age of 13 and immediately exhibited extraordinary talent. By the time he published his opus one, he already had dozens of works to his credit.

His monumental and massive **String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.3** was composed in 1894 and entered in the annual competition for fine arts held by the Royal Academy of Belgium where it was awarded the top prize by the jury. Its extraordinary power and virtuosity was immediately recognized not only in Belgium but also in France, England and Germany, where it was performed with regularity until after the First World War when highly romantic works went out of fashion. The first movement, *Adagio-Allegro risoluto*, begins with an incredibly powerful and pregnant slow introduction. The main part of the movement combines an almost frantic, headlong-rushing main theme with a more lyrical second. The next movement, a massive *Adagio-Allegro agitato-Adagio*, begins and ends with a beautiful and highly romantic slow section. The dance-like middle part approaches the grotesque due to its highly unusual and original rhythm. The third movement, *Allegro scherzando--Prestissimo--*

Tempo di Scherzando, is basically a scherzo with a trio section--but here the scherzando is heavier and slower than the powerful trio section which blasts forward at incredible speed. The satisfying finale, *Allegro molto*, is written on a huge tonal canvas, combining rhythmic force with lyrical melody. In my opinion, this work is a masterpiece. Excellent choice for concert and home.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.50 dates from 1916 and was written while Jongen lived in England because of the German occupation of Belgium. While the first quartet has an affinity with traditional Central European musical language and perhaps shows some influence of César Franck, the Second has assimilated the advances made by the French impressionists. In three big movements, it opens with an *Allegro moderato*. While the main theme is heroic, the music lacks the aggressive edge found in the First Quartet. The mood throughout is unmistakably early 20th century French, highly melodic and atmospheric. The second movement, a very pensive, almost dreary and tonally wayward *Lento*, is also unmistakably French. The upbeat finale, *Molto vivo*, is lively and optimistic. This is a very fine work but, to me, it lacks the originality one finds in his first quartet. The music, while not sounding of any one composer, nonetheless is an amalgam of the whole impressionist movement. Perhaps a concert performance is justified, only for experienced amateurs.

His **Two Serenades for String Quartet Op.61** date from 1918, while Jongen was still living in London. Each serenade is in three movements which are played without pause. The first, *Sérénade tendre*, begins with a melancholy theme in the upper voices against the cello *pizzicato* which creates the sound of a guitar accompaniment. The theme of the second section is closely related to that of the first, but the treatment is edgy and tonally exotic. The third section, closely related to the others, has a mysterious quality to it. The second, *Sérénade dramatique*, begins with all four voices playing a disjointed *pizzicato* introduction before the first violin introduces a sad, penetrating melody. Slowly one realizes that this is music of the night. The middle section begins simply with a lovely theme into which Jongen inserts fascinating dissonances that slowly changes the mood. The final section has a bright tune for its main theme. Quickly it broadens and builds both tension and excitement leading to wonderful coda. These are both very appealing works which would do well in concert. Not to be missed by experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in D Major, Op.67 was composed in 1921 and premiered in Brussels two years later to considerable acclaim. It is a big work, classic in conception, still showing the elegance of French impressionism and perhaps might have entered the standard repertoire if atonalism and neo-classicism had not been all the rage at the time. In the opening movement, *Allegro non troppo*, a somewhat tense main theme is introduced by the first violin and the cello, with the former taking a highly charged and romantic melody further alone. The second theme is calmer. A bright and lively Scherzo comes next and is followed by a big slow movement, *Andantino molto cantabile*. A somber, but not sad, melody is presented in chordal fashion by all four voices. Carefully and over time, tension and drama are built up. The highly rhythmical first theme to the finale, *Trés animé*, is upbeat and full of optimism. The second section, opened by the cello, is highly dramatic and full of intensity. This is a first rate work which should interest both amateurs and professionals.



Paul Juon (1872-1940) was the son of Swiss parents who emigrated to Moscow where he was born. Educated at the Moscow German High School, he entered the Moscow Conservatory where he studied violin with Jan Hrimaly and composition with Anton Arensky and Sergei Taneyev. After graduating, he went to Berlin for further composition instruction from Woldemar Bargiel In 1906,

after holding various posts in Russia, Juon was invited by Joseph Joachim, head of the prestigious Berlin Hochschule für Musik, to be a Professor of Composition. It was a post he held until 1934 at which time he moved to Switzerland, where lived for the rest of his life. During his lifetime, Juon was widely regarded as an important composer and his works were given frequent performance throughout Europe. Chamber music plays a large part of his total output which numbers more than 100 works. He is widely regarded as the link between Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky. In his early music, one can hear the influence of his Russian homeland and schooling. Of course, Juon recognized that though he had been born in Russia and schooled there, he was a still foreigner living among Russians. His second period is more cosmopolitan and is in tune with the contemporary Central European trends of the early 20th century. It is hard to characterize his music as Russian or German, Romantic, Modern or Folkloric, because one can find all of these elements in his music.

His **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.5** dates from 1898. It is a huge work--tonally at times approaching the orchestral and in length approaching the symphonic. The opening Allegro moderato has powerful Russian-sounding theme for its first subject. The beautiful and lyrical second theme also is of Russian origin. The broad Adagio sostenuto which follows takes its time, like a slowly flower unfolding in the sun, to reveal the fullness of its extended melody. A happy, energetic Scherzo, molto presto, in the tradition of Taneyev, serves as the middle movement. A gorgeous and highly romantic trio section brings contrast. A brief Intermezzo, in the form of a contrapuntal baroque minuet, is used as a "palette cleanser", the theme is Russian. The finale, Vivacissimo, is a rondo, which brings back the main theme of the opening movement only to give it an completely different treatment. A pounding Russian rhythm takes the music in an entirely different and exciting direction. A first class work, worthy of concert performance and warmly recommended to amateur players. His second string quartet, composed in 1896, has never been published.

The **String Quartet No.3 in a minor, Op.29** dates from 1905. Not as massive as his First Quartet, it is still a big work. The opening measures of the first movement, Allegro molto, begin in a somewhat questioning fashion before the theme is properly stated. Energetic and attractive, the movement is an example of how is music is an amalgam of Russian and Germanic tendencies. The second movement Lento assai, is the most extraordinary of the work. It begins with a cello solo and the mood remains declamatory, even when the others join in. The whole is in the form of a polyphonic recitative. The third movement, Moderato, opens with an oriental sounding melody, of which the Russians were fond of using. At first slow, it gradually picks up speed and is clearly an descendant of the Russian National School. Further on, a Slavic second theme is released. The finale begins with a lengthy Lento assai introduction which is taken from the second movement. The first theme to the main part of the movement, Vivace non troppo, is clearly a Slavic folk dance. A very original work, which does not sound like anyone else. Certainly well worth playing both in concert and at home.

His **String Quartet No.4, Op.67**, sometimes listed as being in C Major and less often in d minor though it is in neither key, was completed around 1916. Unlike his previous quartets, it is neither Russian sounding nor late Romantic. While remaining tonal, the quartet clearly demonstrates that Juon, while rejecting atonalism, had nonetheless moved on and had assimilated many developments of the post romantic tonal era. The Quartet was dedicated to Carl Wendling, concertmaster of the Stuttgart Philharmonic and leader of a then well-known string quartet bearing his name. The four movements, Allegro, Andante, Allegretto and Allegro non troppo e ben marcato are full of drama and at times violent, perhaps reflecting the turmoil of the First World War then in its third year, but also not without tender and searching moments. This is a valuable work from the post romantic era

which while expanding the borders traditional tonality, does not eschew it altogether. It could be brought into the concert hall and would also be of interested to experienced amateur players.



Dmitri Kabalevsky (1904-87) was born in St. Petersburg, the son of a mathematician. He was intended for a similar career, but instead and against his parents wishes, chose to enter the Moscow Conservatory where he studied piano and composition with Georgi Catoire and Nikolai Myaskovsky. A product entirely of the Soviet era, he embraced the so-called school of Soviet realism and is considered one of the most important

representative composers of this period. He wrote in virtually every genre and his works for children in particular were considered of great importance. His best known work is his suite for small orchestra although his violin and cello concertos have enjoyed considerable popularity.

String Quartet No.1 in a minor, Op.8 was composed in 1928. Although it was a youthful work, Kabalevsky demonstrates complete mastery of form and of his material, especially in the use of his harmonies and cross rhythms. In four movements, the work follows a cyclical form. The lyrical opening Allegro moderato, after a soft, slow, modal Andante introduction, proceeds to create a haunting, atmosphere of yearning. A highly rhythmic and boisterous Scherzo comes next. Over a pulsing 16th notes, a Russian folk melody is roughly drummed out. The second theme is more lyrical. The slow movement, Andantino, stands in stark contrast, with reflective and subdued thematic material. The finale, Allegro assai, brings many of the same qualities as the Scherzo. A wild, whirling rhythm serves as an accompaniment to a Russian folk song. A first class work which would certainly triumph in the concert hall. It can be recommended to technically assured amateurs who will also enjoy this quartet.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor, Op.44 was composed during the final years of World War II and completed in 1945. It was premiered the following year and won the USSR State Prize. It is in five movements although the fourth and fifth movements are played attacca, that is without pause. The big opening movement, Allegro, begins with a series of chords alternating between the minor and major. One can hear the influence of the war years in the power and sweep of the hard driving main subject, clearly Russian in origin. Although there are lyrical interludes, the impelling ferocity of the music, ultimately overwhelms the lovely song like sections. The second movement, Andante non troppo, with the cello singing a somewhat melancholy melody accompanied by soft pizzicato in the other voices. As the other voices join in, there is a darker, even more serious mood. Next comes a Scherzando leggiero, in which the strings are muted for much of the time. It is an awkward, ghostly dance. The fourth movement is a somber, almost funereal Adagio which leads without pause to the finale, simply marked L'istesso tempo. which then morphs into a Vivace giocoso, a wild, hair raising and thrilling mischievous gallop This quartet is as fine as any dating from this period by a Soviet composer, and need fear comparison with any of those by Shostakovich, Myaskovsky or Prokofiev. It belongs in the concert hall and can also be managed by very talented amateurs.

Robert Kahn (1865-1951) was born in German city of Mannheim of a well-to-do banking family. He began his studies at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. There, he got to know and became friends with Joseph Joachim who was the director. It was through both Joachim and his own family that he had a chance to get to know Brahms, who was so impressed with Kahn that he offered to give him composition lessons. However, Kahn was too overawed to accept. Nevertheless, Brahms did help Kahn infor-



mally, and while Kahn's work does, to some extent, show the influence of Brahms, he is an eclectic and independent composer whose music has its own originality. After finishing his studies in Berlin, Kahn, on Brahms' suggestion, went to Munich to study with Joseph Rheinberger. After completing his own studies, he worked for a while as a free lance composer before obtaining a position at the Hochschule in Berlin where he eventually

became a professor of piano and composition.

His **String Quartet in A Major, Op.8** dates from 1890 and dedicated to the Joachim String Quartet. While there is no question that this is a fine work, keeping it together from an ensemble standpoint is not at all easy. In the opening movement, Allegro vivace, the main theme is powerful and full of fire. Subsequent melodies provide excellent contrast. The problem here is the dense nature of the contrapuntal writing which often makes it difficult to follow where the theme is going. The second movement is a deeply felt Adagio espressivo, which is twice interrupted by turbulent interludes. The third movement, a Presto, serves as a very effective scherzo. Kahn ends the work with a theme and set of variations, Allegro molto. It could be given concert performance, but can only be recommended to amateurs who are used to playing rhythmically tricky works and staying together.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op.60 came out in 1914. It is in three movements and begins with an Allegro which shows the strong influence of Brahms. While the main theme is superb, the second subject is rather threadbare. The middle movement, Molto vivace, is the scherzo with a fleet main theme and nicely contrasting and lyrical trio section. The finale, Andante, is another theme with variations, which are both interesting and effective. Another good work Recommended for concert and amateurs.



Johann Wenzel Kalliwoda (1801-66), Jan Vaclav Kalivoda in the Czech form, is a name though virtually unknown today, except perhaps to violinists. However, he was a well-known and highly respected composer, conductor and soloist during his lifetime. Schumann, among others, held a high opinion of his compositions. He was born in Prague and studied at the conservatory there. After some years of touring as a

concert violinist, he chose permanent employment as conductor of the Donaueschingen Orchestra at the court of Prince Karl Egon II. Thereafter, Kalliwoda devoted what free time he had to composition as a means of supplementing his income and was, for the last 30 years of his life, considered a "house composer" by the publisher C.F. Peters who brought out all but 60 of his nearly 250 works. In 1831, Peters commissioned three string quartets, specifying that they "*were not to be merely a showcase for the first violin, but that the music should be divided up nicely among the instruments and in the beautiful style of Mozart.*"

String Quartet No.1 in e minor, Op.61 was completed in 1835. The opening of the first movement, Allegro moderato, is highly chromatic and almost modern sounding. This gives way to a very dramatic main theme brought forth by the first violin. While the style is neither concertante nor a quatour brillant a la Spohr, nonetheless, Kalliwoda seems to have had some trouble following the instruction of "*nicely dividing up the music*" and more than the lions share is given to the first violin. None of the other voices are given the chance to carry any of the themes for more than a few moments at a time. In the Adagio which follows, he is more successful. The main theme is quite lovely and presented as a group effort, with the cello taking the lead in the early innings. The second theme borders on being tripe

while the dramatic middle section, underpinned by an accompaniment of drummed triplets, is quite effective. The very original Scherzo, with its quirky rhythm, is entirely pizzicato and extremely well done. In the contrasting trio section, the lower voices imitate the droning of bagpipes, while the first violin plays a folk melody. The exciting finale, Vivace, is, more or less, a group effort with all taking part. The themes are appealing and a clever fugue pushes the music forward effortlessly. All in all, this is a good work, pleasant to hear and fun to play.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.62 was completed a year after the first in 1836. The Allegro vivace, which begins the quartet, starts with two powerful chords, portending a dramatic and stormy theme to come. But what follows is a rather sunny and light-hearted mazurka. At times very fast plunging passages dominate, but they are separated by more relaxed episodes where the music is more expansive. Most of the difficult and fleet passage work is given to the first violin. The second movement is a short scherzo, Presto. It begins as a canon between the first violin and cello before the former breaks loose and carries the melody by itself. The trio consists of a very beautiful and lyrical melody given to the first violin and then the viola. Next comes an Adagio, which opens with the cello brooding in its lowest register. The rest of the movement is an aria for the first violin, with a soft accompaniment. The short finale, Vivace, is an exciting moto perpetuo but almost entirely for the first violin.

String Quartet No.3 in G Major, Op.90 dates from 1838. Kalliwoda seems to have entirely forgotten the instructions he received from Peters because this work, more or less, is a vehicle for the first violin, a quatour brillant. Recognizing this, of its kind, it is on a par with, if not superior to the best of the works of Spohr. It is full of lovely themes and fine writing. Of the three, the first quartet is the best, but all are worth hearing if not playing, but it is unlikely you will ever hear them in concert.



Edvin Kallstenius (1881-1967) was born in the Swedish town of Filipstad. Initially, he studied science at Lund University but decided on a career in music and subsequently enrolled at the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied composition with Stefan Krehl. He pursued a career as a composer, music critic and music librarian for Swedish Radio. Chamber music represents a large part of what he wrote and includes some eight string quartets, a string trio, two

trios for winds and strings and several sonatas. Prior to the First World War, he was considered one of Sweden's leading composers. But today, if he is remembered at all, it is for his arrangement of the Swedish folk tune Du gamla, Du fria (You old, you free), the de facto Swedish national anthem. His music can be divided into two periods. In the first, those works composed before 1920, he was influenced by the late Romantic composers, in particular Richard Strauss and Max Reger as well as the French impressionist composer Claude Debussy. His later works show the influence of Schoenberg's 12 tone system. He composed eight string quartets. I am only familiar with his third and his seventh quartet. His first two string quartets were composed between 1904 and 1905 while he was studying with Krehl in Leipzig and were his Op.1 and 2 respectively.

String Quartet No.3 in c minor, Op.8 came nearly a decade later and dates from 1914. The first movement, Allegro cantabile, begins with a searching melody given out by the cello over a flowing, restless eighth note accompaniment in the other voices. Slowly tension is built until a more lyrical section is presented. The second movement, Andante espressivo, quasi adagio, is sad and reflective. The finale, Allegro poco un fantastic, tempo di marcia, begins as a thumping, somewhat awkward march, rushing off here and there, eventually a slower more lyrical subject

appears. While this quartet requires experienced chamber music player, it is well worth the effort. An interesting work, ahead of its time, which deserves concert performance. **String Quartet No.7** dates from 1957. It is a short work, lasting less than a quarter of an hour. It is not atonal, however, neither is it tonal in the traditional sense. It is an interesting but hardly an exciting work. It can be managed by amateur players. I would not think it ought to be programed in concert.

Kurt Kárnaue (1866-1944) was born in the German town of Cottbus about 75 miles southeast of Berlin. He enjoyed a tripartite career as a doctor, a writer and a composer. Through most of his life he worked as a practicing surgeon and was the author of several medical texts. He was also a novelist who published crime stories and was an active composer who composed an opera, as well as several orchestral and instrumental works. His **Am Allerseelentage** (on all souls day) was originally published in 1930 but was composed around 1900. It is beautifully written for all the voices and is a fine, emotive elegy.



Rudolf Karel (1880-1945) was born in the Czech town of Pilsen (Plzen in Czech). He was said to be the last student of Dvorak's with whom he studied composition from 1899 to 1904. He wrote three string quartets. **String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.3** was finished in 1903, while he was still studying with Dvorak. I am not familiar with it. It seems to have disappeared and one would have though that if Dvorak found it good, it would still be around somewhere.

String Quartet No 2 in E flat Major, Op.8 dates from 1910. It is, for its time, tonally very forward looking. One can hear vestiges of Czech melody but it is an astringent work for the most part, hard to keep together and technically challenging. It is also a big work. In three movements, the first, Adagio, allegro conspirito, is unremittingly harsh and is pretty hard to follow, so much is going on. Few amateurs will be able to make much sense of this. The middle movement, Adagio molto, is lyrical and easier to play. It is in three sections, the last being a misterioso. An Allegro appassionato con fuoco concludes the work. Powerful and thrusting and certainly not the easiest thing to put together. Though tonal, the unrelenting harshness of this work makes it less than a pleasant experience for most and I do not see it having any success in the concert hall. I am not familiar with his String Quartet No.3 was completed in 1937.



Moritz Kässmayer (1831-1884) was born in Vienna and spent his entire life there. He studied at the Vienna Conservatory with Simon Sechter and Joseph Bohm after which he served as a violinist in the first violin section of the Vienna Philharmonic and later as Director of Ballet Music for the Austrian Imperial Court Opera. He mostly composed chamber music, the most famous of which are his **Humorous and Contrapuntal Volkslieder or Folk Songs for**

String Quartet, which appeared in 13 separate volumes, each containing four folk songs from different nations or parts of Austria. He also wrote five serious string quartets and a string quintet for 2 violas. The Volkslieder were composed between 1853 and 1880 and range from Op.14 to Op.41. They were not all published until after the composer's death in 1885, the first appearing in 1873. You will certainly recognize some of the folksongs from Germany, Steyermark and Vienna in Austria, from Norway, and Hungary. They are superbly done. Brahms, who was a friend, often made visits to the Kässmayer family home to hear these

works played. They can be brought to the concert hall where shorter works are required and are warmly recommended to amateurs.



Most of the standard reference sources have little or nothing to say about **Hugo Kauder** (1888-1972), who has flown beneath their radar. Kauder was one of several Austro-Hungarian composers born in the last period of the Romantic movement, who along with such men as Karl Weigl, Erich Korngold, Leo Weiner and Zoltan Kodaly, rejected the atonalism of the Second Vienna School. Kauder was born in the Moravian town of Tobitschau. His only formal lessons were on the violin and he was largely a self-taught composer. He moved to Vienna in 1905 where he pursued a career as a composer and performer in various string quartets. He emigrated to the United States after the Nazis annexed Austria. His compositions are tonal and varied in approach and musical thought. He is said to have composed 19 string quartets. However, after the first four, he did away with bar lines and the works are certainly less than easy to navigate. I have only played the first four and am not familiar with the others.

String Quartet No.1 in c minor dates from 1921 and was composed for the Gottesmann Quartet of which he was the violinist. The opening movement, though marked *Ruhig, streng gemessen* (Quiet, strong and grave), begins with a funereal introduction followed by a turbulent and dramatic section which is full of passion. The gorgeous, elegiac second movement, *Sehr langsam* (adagio) begins with a marvelous viola solo, well-suited to the Jewish folk melody which is employed for the main theme. There is a wonderful bright, playful middle section. The finale, *Sehr mäßig bewegt* (moderato assai), is a series of variations on a fugue. The writing is magnificent and calls to mind Beethoven's *Grosse Fuga*, though on a small scale. This is an appealing work which would work well in concert and should interest amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in G Major dates from 1924. The work was intended as a wedding present for his wife and is filled with lovely melodies and grace. The optimistic main theme to the opening movement, *Ruhig fließend* (calm and flowing), is primarily in the key of G Major and is presented in turns by the violin and viola. The short second movement, *Rasch und flüchtig* (quick and fleet) has a scherzo-like quality. The main subject, given out by the violin, is full of forward motion. Its treatment is very original with the cello and viola being given important roles. The finale, *Sehr gemächlich--Lebhaft* (Very easy, moderate--lively) is a theme and set of variations. It begins with an upbeat melody somewhat related to the first theme of the preceding movement. The theme is jovial and celebratory while the many variations provide excellent contrast and original treatment of the theme. While not as powerful or as dramatic as the first quartet, this, too, is an appealing work suitable for concert or home.

String Quartet No.3 was written two years later in 1926. Only in two movements, it is a set of variations in three sections based on the German Bohemian folksong *Ach Liebe, bist gar vergänglich, wie ein Wasserlein* (Oh Love, how fickle you are, as inconstant as a little brook.) The first part is a prelude, a beautiful fugal treatment of the theme. It is in the second section that we hear the true statement of the melody, which is presented by the viola and then answered by each of the others. Eight variations, predominantly dark in mood, then follow.

String Quartet No.4 was written in 1927 and was premiered in Vienna by the famous Rosé Quartet. It is in 5 short movements. All, but the fourth are built on modal tonalities. In the first, *Con moto*, a long-lined, fluid main theme brings to mind running water and is played against pizzicato accompaniment. Pizzicato is played by the accompanying voices virtually throughout. The following *Lento* has a distant quality but makes

no immediate impression. The scherzo-like middle movement, *Molto vivace*, though modal makes a stronger impression. The fourth and only traditionally tonal movement, *Andante con moto*, has for its main theme a soulful melody with a vague mediaeval chant-like quality to it. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, is a nervous fugue based on the theme from the first movement. While this is certainly an interesting work, even a good one, overall, it does not make the impact as the first three.



Hugo Kaun (1863-1932) was born in Berlin and received his musical education there, studying composition with Friedrich Kiel at the Royal Prussian Academy of Music. In 1887, he moved to the United States and settled in the city of Milwaukee where he lived for 13 years. Milwaukee had a large German-American population and Kaun taught at the Milwaukee Conservatory. He acquired quite a reputation as a com-

poser as several of his works were premiered by the Chicago Symphony under the direction of his friend Theodore Thomas who had founded the orchestra. He returned to Berlin in 1900, where he remained for the rest of his life, teaching and composing. His style is late romantic and shows the influences of Brahms, Bruckner and Wagner. He wrote a fair amount of chamber music, including 4 string quartets, a string quintet, an octet, two piano trios and a piano quintet.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.40 dates from 1898. The first movement begins with an *allegro*, *Bewegt und mit Geisterung* (moving and with spirit). The second movement is in the manner of a funeral march in the minor. Kaun writes on the score, 'In memory of a hero'. Specifically it was the captain of the tragically shipwrecked steamer, the *Elbe*, who was a close friend of Kaun's. There are several upbeat episodes which come like spiritual greetings over the border of the dead to the living who grieve. This movement recalls Schubert in its depth of feeling. A very effective string quartet. A good choice for the concert hall and also well suited to amateur players.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.41 came in 1900, shortly after he returned to Germany. It begins with quietly with a fugue, *Sehr ruhig* developed at length masterfully. The second movement is a very effective scherzo, *Sehr Lebhaft*, followed by a short, beautiful trio section. The finale is really two movements rolled into one. It begins slowly and then picks tempo as it goes along. I have only heard this work performed and it is clearly one that is quite difficult to play well.

String Quartet No.3 in c minor, Op.74 appeared in 1907. . The construction of the movements and the development of the subjects are very finely done, while the music itself hold one's attention throughout. The first movement, *Sehr lebhaft, energisch* (very lively, energetic) is dramatically conceived and would not be out of place in a symphony. The slow movement, *Sehr ruhig, innig* (very quiet, deeply felt), has a very expressive main subject and a kind of funeral march. The return of the main subject is marked by agitation in the accompaniment, but a short coda brings the movement to a clear and quiet ending. In the slow Minuet, the old form and the modern spirit are happily combined. In the finale, which is in C Major, Kaun's ingenuity appears at its best in variations on a simple and very appealing theme. Not at all easy to pull off, but certainly worth the effort. It would do well in concert.

String Quartet No.4 in a minor, Op.114, dates from 1921. The slow opening movement, *Sehr ruhig, träumerisch* (calm and dreamlike) is really neither. It is rather an cross between an unsettling yearning. There are intonation challenges here. The second movement *Sehr lebhaft mit Humor* is lively, with a somewhat nervous feel and not particularly genial, although at times playful. Next comes a slow movement, *Sehr ruhig und innig*. Here the

title fits the music which follows, which is peaceful and lyrical. The finale, *Lebhaft* is probably the riveting of the four movements but not easy to pull off. Another very good work, but only in the hands of professional players. Good standard amateurs will make sense of it if they study it beforehand.



Friedrich Kiel (1821-1885), Kiel was taught the rudiments of music and received his first piano lessons from his father but was in large part self-taught. Something of a prodigy, he played the piano almost without instruction at the age of six, and by his thirteenth year he had composed much music. Kiel eventually came to the attention of Prince Wittgenstein, a great music lover. Through the Prince's efforts, Kiel was allowed to study violin with

the concertmaster of the Prince's fine orchestra with which he later performed as a soloist. Kiel was also given theory lessons from the renowned flautist Kaspar Kummer. By 1840, the eighteen year old Kiel was court conductor and the music teacher to the prince's children. Two years later, Spohr heard him and arranged for a scholarship which allowed Kiel to study in Berlin with the renowned theorist and teacher Siegfried Dehn. In Berlin, Kiel eventually became sought after as an instructor. In 1866, he received a teaching position at the prestigious Stern Conservatory, where he taught composition and was elevated to a professorship three years later. In 1870 he joined the faculty of the newly founded Hochschule für Musik which was shortly thereafter considered one of the finest music schools in Germany. Among his many students were Robert Kahn, Hugo Kaun, Zygmunt Noskowski, Ignacy Paderewski and Charles Villiers Stanford. Kiel's extreme modesty kept him and his exceptional works from receiving the consideration they deserved. His chamber works need fear no comparison. That they have not entered the standard repertoire is a travesty.

Kiel's **String Quartet No.1 in a minor, Op.53 No.1** dates from 1869. It was clearly inspired by Beethoven's String Quartet No.15, Op.132. The tempo marking to the towering, massive opening movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is somewhat misleading. There really is nothing *allegro* here and in any event, the tempi are constantly changing while the mood remains elegaic throughout. In the charming second movement, *Allegro*, we hear echoes of Beethoven in the lovely *Tedesca* folk dance. The third movement is a solemn *Adagio* with a turbulent, passionate middle section of great originality. The finale, begins with a brief slow introduction before a hectic tarantella breaks forth. The lovely singing second theme provides a beautiful contrast. This is a very fine work which belongs in the standard repertoire. Not beyond good amateur players who know their Late Beethoven.

String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major, Op.53 No.2 was composed immediately after his first. Though certainly a good work, it does not make quite as strong impression upon hearing as does No.1, perhaps because it does not have the same brooding quality one finds in the magnificent first movement of the earlier effort. The bright, opening *Allegro con spirit* bubbles over with many effective themes. In the *Larghetto* which follows, the deeply felt music again recalls Beethoven. The *Allegro moderato ma energico* serves as a scherzo. It's awkward rhythms is not dissimilar to the kind of which Beethoven was fond. The finale, *Vivace*, is filled with lively, appealing music. In 1879, Kiel composed the first of his two sets of waltzes for string quartet.

Three Waltzes for String Quartet, Op.73. These are not lightweight, salon music. Critics called them the finest set of waltzes for string quartet written. This extraordinary music deserves to be heard and played. Any of the three would make an outstanding encore for a professional group and all three would serve nicely where a shorter work is required. The first waltz has both lyrical, explosive and haunting episodes. The second waltz

alternates from rich, full-blooded tunes, to light and delicate melodies. Of particular interest is that it includes a long solo section for cello while the others rest. The charming third waltz combines elements of the preceding two. These waltzes achieved tremendous popularity and it was because of this that Kiel's publisher begged him for another set.

He complied and the result was **New Waltzes for String Quartet, Op.78**. In one movement with a number of contrasting sections, they comprise a daisy chain of wonderful waltzes of high quality for string quartet.



Wilhelm Kienzl (1857-1941), like Carl Loewe, made his name as an opera composer. However, Kienzl also knew how to write for string quartet. His three quartets, are interesting, and though of varying quality, do deserve to be heard. Kienzl, who was born in the small Austrian town of Waizenkirchen studied music at Prague University and later in Leipzig with Liszt.

String Quartet No.1 in b flat minor, Op.22 dates from 1880 immediately after he had completed his studies. As one might expect, it is full of youthful exuberance, turmoil and tumult. Kienzl wrote, that at the time, the music of Schumann and especially Schubert was most on his mind. The opening movement, Largo-Allegro moderato, begins with a brief, but highly-charged slow introduction. There is the sense of impending tragedy. And, in fact, the lovely main theme to the Allegro has a sad, pleading quality to it. Kienzl follows this with a graceful, old-fashioned minuet and trio. The melancholy slow movement, Adagio ma non troppo, clearly has the aura of Schubert about it. In the striking finale, Allegro energico e molto vivace, Kienzl replaces the dark mood of the Adagio with one of hope. This boisterous music, which is in the major, is full of optimism and youthful excitement. The writing provides a good example of the brilliance Kienzl could achieve. In sum, this is a fairly good quartet, though it is not without some blemishes. There are several florid passages which would have been best omitted. Mendelssohn, of course, was guilty of the same sin,

String Quartet No.2 in c minor, Op.99 was written forty years later, the inspiration being the death of his wife in 1919 and the disastrous end of WWI for his beloved Austria, stripped of its imperial grandeur and charm. In its place was a drab, down at the heels Republic, the sad torso, whose splendid appendages had been brutally amputated. This is a powerful and very substantial work. It is also autobiographical program music in the tradition of Smetana's *From My Life*. Kienzl inscribed the top of the quartet with words expressing the pain he felt over his losses. The short but slow introduction of the big opening Adagio-Allegro energico immediately makes it clear that something like a death has occurred. Tension then builds as an angry Allegro is called forth. Though the tempo is quick, there is a strange lugubrious feel to it. One hears cries of anguish, moments of hope, followed by moments of despair. The coda is particularly melodramatic. The lovely second movement, Adagio, though not shot through with the pain of the first movement, nonetheless, has a sad and mournful quality. It brings to mind images of days past and things of beauty which have perished. An effective Scherzo follows this. It is certainly not joyful music, but neither is it sad. It has a mild, playful quality, but one with a cutting edge somewhere in the background. Above the finale, Moderato, Allegro commodo e leggiero, Kienzl inscribed words of tribute to Vienna, the City of Mirth and Brilliance. Here, the music is at its gayest, full of Viennese color and dance rhythms. This is a first rate quartet, mature with the ripeness of human experience, devoid of the errors found in his first quartet. Highly recommended for concert performance and to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in E Flat Major, Op.113 was composed in 1928. Of the three, it is the most concise. Though not an overtly happy work, it has none of the anguish of No.2. The opening movement, Allegro con fuoco, reminds one, tonally speaking, of Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss. It is optimistic, yet with a sense of destiny. An emotionally low-keyed but very romantic Andante in the form of a lied follows. Next comes a quasi lyrical Scherzo. The short finale, Vivacissimo, is full of high spirits. Its rollicking horse ride rhythm, full of bustle, is a direct descendant of the finale from the First Quartet. Though hardly *au courant* for 1928, this is a richly romantic work of very high quality. This quartet as well as No.2 deserves to be heard in concert and explored by amateurs who will also find No.1 of value.



Theodor Kirchner (1823-1903) was widely considered to be the undisputed master of the character piece, a short kind of free form work. Kirchner literally wrote hundreds of such pieces which can rightly be considered little gems, little masterpieces. He was born in the town of Neukirchen near Chemnitz in the German province of Saxony and showed a prodigious musical talent at an early age. Schumann and Mendelssohn persuades his reluctant father to send Theodor to the Leipzig Conservatory, where he studied with Mendelssohn,

among others. He was a friend of both Robert and Clara Schumann as well as Brahms. Kirchner's compositional talent was widely respected and held in the highest regard by Schumann, Brahms, Liszt, Wagner and many others. But Kirchner, found himself unable to write large scale works. Rather, he excelled at writing miniatures. He would often write several at a time and then publish them together, each with a different mood and feel and each perfect in its own way. Though primarily known, during his lifetime, as an organist, pianist and teacher, he wrote more than 1,000 works, most are short and for the piano, although he did write a small amount of very appealing chamber music virtually all of it with piano and strings.

Unfortunately, his **String Quartet in G Major, Op.20** is a dull work not worthy of your time.

It is hard to believe that the same composer could also pen something as wonderful as his **Nur Tropfen for String Quartet**. *Nur Tropfen*---in English, 'Mere Drops'---was published shortly before Kirchner's death in 1903, appeared with the subtitle 'Ganz kleine stücke'---'Very tiny pieces'. They are, in essence, a suite of seven miniatures, each with its own character. Short and charming, not surprisingly, they are superbly crafted. Here Kirchner was in his element and why he was the master of the miniature. Deserving concert performance and recommended to amateurs.



Dmytro Klebanov (1907-1987) Dmitri is the Russian form of the Ukrainian name Dmytro). He was born in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv (then known as Kharkov and part of the Russian empire). He studied piano, viola and composition at the Kharkiv Music and Drama Institute. After briefly playing viola in the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, he returned to Kharkiv where he pursued a career as a composer, conductor and teacher, eventually becoming a professor at the Kharkiv Conservatory in 1960.

His first symphony, composed in 1945 and titled "In Memoriam to the Martyrs of Babi Yar" was attacked by Stalinist music critics who found it anti-patriotic. He was accused of distortion of the historic truth about the Soviet people and of national narrow-mindedness. Shortly thereafter, Stalin made his famous attack on Soviet artists with the result that Soviet Composers were forced

to compose politically correct works of "socialist realism."

Klebanov's **String Quartet No.4** was an example and product of the Stalinist constraints placed on composers during this time. Composers were instructed to base their musical materials almost exclusively on folk music. In this respect, Klebanov succeeds admirably by putting together a highly accessible work which, apart from a few echoes of French impressionism harks back to the era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Slavic music. I was fortunate to obtain a copy of the score in 2022 from which Edition Silvertrust made the world premiere set of parts. This allowed me and my fellow quartetters to play, not without some difficulty, this fine work. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, begins with a repetitive phrase presented in canonic form. The main part of the movement, Allegro, at first shows the influence of Paul Dukas. This theme dominates affairs but does alternate with an older melodic style which was characteristic of late and post Romanticism. The cello begins the second movement, Larghetto, before the others join in. It is a sad dirge bordering on the funereal. Third comes a lively, somewhat frenetic Scherzo in which the first section is entirely played pizzicato. Later, a Ukrainian folk dance melody is introduced, followed by other Ukrainian folk tunes which create a constant sense of forward movement. The finale, Allegro, is joyous, boisterous and full of upbeat Ukrainian folk melodies. A master quartet deserving concert performance but only for very experienced amateurs.

I have only heard and not played **String Quartet No.5** which dates from 1959. It is altogether different from No.4. Stalin had been dead for 6 years and the Khrushchev regime was no longer punishing composers who did not write socialist realism music. This allowed Klebanov to dip into dissonances. While interesting, the quartet requires more than one hearing. I believe parts are in preparation but it will not be a work for amateurs.



Julius Klengel (1859–1933) was born in the German city of Leipzig. He came from a musical family. His father was a keen amateur player and his grandfather was a composer. For several years, no less than 7 members of the Klengel family played in the famous Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. A gifted cellist, Julius Klengel enjoyed a career as a soloist, orchestral player, teacher and composer. He served for more than 40 years

as the principal cellist of the LGO and also became a professor of cello at the Leipzig Conservatory. Among his many students were Emanuel Feuermann, Guilhermina Suggia, Paul Grümmer, Gregor Piatigorsky, and William Pleeth.

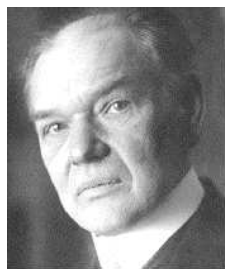
His **String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.21**, which dates from 1888 is in four movements. The work opens with a genial but full-blooded and tonally rich Brahmsian Allegro non troppo. The second movement, Thema con variazione, is a theme and set of six variations. The theme is simple but beautiful, perhaps of folk melody origin. The viola and cello are each given the lead in separate variations and the concluding variation is a whirlwind scherzo. Although the third movement is titled Scherzo, it is really more like an exotic intermezzo, complete with a touch of the orient. The finale, Allegro, is a kind of lopsided tarantella, playful and full of high spirits. This is a solid work, tuneful, grateful to play. It can be recommended to amateurs for home performance but probably not a compelling choice for the concert hall.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.34 appeared in 1895. It has many of the same qualities as his first work, but is considerably more difficult to put together. Probably not worth the effort.

Frederik Vilhelm Klint (1811-1894) was born in the Swedish town of Visby. He studied composition and organ at Uppsala University and subsequently at the Royal Swedish Music Conservatory in Stockholm. For much of the 19th century, it was

impossible for Swedish musicians to make a living as composers and many were forced to take jobs which had nothing to do with music altogether, such as watch making and glass blowing, in order to make a living. Klint was a bit more fortunate in that he was able to obtain the position as chief organist for a number of churches in Gotland. This was one of the most lucrative jobs a Swedish musician could hope for at that time. Klint wrote six string quartet of which all but this one remain in manuscript.

His **String Quartet in A Major, Op.25 No.2** was composed around 1850 but Klint was, unfortunately, unable to find a publisher for it until 1882. In four movements, it opens with a tuneful Allegro con spirit which is perhaps more lyrical than spirited. The second movement, Menuetto, tranquillo e molto moderato, is a bright, lively country minuet with a contrasting rustic trio. Next comes an Andante which is a theme and a set of interesting variations. The theme is based on a Swedish folk tune. The variations are well handled. The finale, an Allegro, begins with a hunting motif given out first by viola and then the others in unison follow. This is a work which is comfortable to play and a good choice for amateur groups looking for a performance work.



Friedrich Klose (1862-1942) was born in the German city of Karlsruhe. He studied composition with Vinzenz Lachner, the younger brother of Franz and Ignaz, in Munich and then went to Vienna where he continued his studies with Anton Bruckner. He subsequently pursued a career as a composer and teacher, working at the conservatories in Basel and Geneva and finally in Munich. Most of his works are for voice

His **String Quartet in E flat Major** dates from 1911 and is his only chamber work. Like much of his music, it shows the influence of Bruckner. The quartet bears the dedicatory inscription "A tribute to His Severity, the German Schoolmaster." Nonetheless, despite this dedication, the quartet does not resemble the dry and pedagogic work that a pedantic music teacher and defender of strict form would consider correct or at least desirable. It is a big and complicated work requiring experienced ensemble players. The opening movement is broadly designed with an elastic tempo. The second movement begins Adagio non troppo and leads to an inspired Andante. Next comes an agitated Scherzo with frequent shifts between pizzicato and arco. The trio section is rhythmically interesting. The finale, departs from tradition in that it is mainly written in a slow tempo. The composer, in the score, quotes from Schiller, "*Let thy heart still shine, become thy refuge / When the wind of life blows loud and strong / Look for freedom's dwelling but in dreamland / Look for beauty's blossom, but in song.*" Though certainly not without interest, it is doubtful that a work of this length could hold the attention of today's audiences and it is beyond the average amateur player.



August Klughardt (1847-1902) was born in the German town of Köthen in Saxon-Anhalt. After studying music locally, Klughardt began to earn his living by conducting. He served in several locales, including Weimar where he worked from 1869 to 1873. There, he met Franz Liszt, which was very important for his creative development. While influenced by Wagner and Liszt, Klughardt did not by any

means entirely adopt the ideology of their New German School, refusing to write tone poems and instead concentrating on symphonies and chamber music. The influence of Robert Schumann, and to a lesser extent Brahms, certainly is equally important. His failure to whole-heartedly adopt Lisztian principals which led to his being labeled as a conservative composer.

Klughardt's **String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.42** was finished in 1883 and premiered by the Joachim String Quartet with great acclaim. Critics hailed it as fresh, original and well put together. It begins with an Allegro, the main theme to which is quite simple. This is followed a sharper second subject which conveys a sense of restless destiny. A fugue is used to develop these themes. A somber religious melody begins the second movement, Adagio. The second subject is even more deeply religious sounding. An agitated middle section has an operatic feel to it. A straight forward Scherzo and contrasting trio come next. The finale, Allegro moderato, begins in playful fashion. Its treatment is canonic. A second theme has an elegiac quality while a third is dominated by its rhythm. A good work but I do not think it deserves concert performance. It can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.61 was completed in 1898. The second subject of the first movement, Allegro moderato, is appealing unlike the first and the development of both is forced. Next is an Andante cantabile, theme and set of variations. The theme is attractive, but the accompaniments in several of the variations are too busy and distracting. Third is a plodding, march like, Allegro moderato. The finale, a Presto, is busy but the thematic material is rather thin. I do not recommend this one.



Zoltan Kodály (1882-1967) is widely regarded as one of the most important Hungarian composers of the 20th century. Kodály was born in town of Kecskemét and from his father, a keen amateur musician, learned to play the violin as a child. In 1900, he entered the Franz Liszt Music Academy in Budapest where he studied composition with Hans Koessler. After graduating, he began a serious study of Hungarian folk melody. In 1905, he started visiting remote vil-

lages and collecting folk songs. Folk melody plays an important part in his music. Kodály later went to Paris where he studied with Charles Widor and was greatly impressed by the music of Debussy and the French impressionists. He composed in most genres, and while he did not write a great deal of chamber music, what he wrote is invariably engaging.

String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.2 dates from 1909 and was the direct product of the researches he undertook with Bela Bartok of Hungarian folk melodies. It was a landmark work in some ways in that it broke with German Romanticism, using original Hungarian folk melody with modern harmony. The opening Andante poco rubato serves as an introduction to the main movement, Allegro, and quotes an actual Hungarian folk song in the statement of the main theme. In the Allegro, the cello announces the theme to a throbbing accompaniment. The second movement, Lento assai tranquillo, is an unhurried fugue. It has as its main theme, a modified version of the opening quote of the Andante, but now in the major. Kodaly creates some very telling tone color episodes with his alternating use of arco and pizzicato passages. Next comes an energetic and exciting scherzo, Presto. The finale, Allegro, is in the form of a theme and an elaborate and brilliant set of variations. This fine work has been totally and unjustly ignored by performing groups outside of Hungary and Austria which is a shame because it is a masterwork.

Though not easy, it is in no way beyond the reach of experienced amateurs. **String Quartet No.2, Op.10** was composed during the First World War and completed in 1918. It was premiered shortly thereafter. Some critics thought the music too simple, others found it too complex and modern. However in many ways, it resembles his First String Quartet, especially in its use of folk melody. However, in other ways it is quite different. For one thing, its structure is no longer traditional but quite free formed. It is in two movements, but in reality each movement consists of several sections and the second movement might well have been divided into at least two if not more. The opening Allegro is char-

acterized by its use of interwoven melodies, none quite independent of the others. The second movement, Andante, is marked 'Quasi recitativ' and begins with the first violin playing a rhapsodic solo. The music proceeds in rather halting sections each strikingly different. Slowly the tempo picks up and the music morphs into an Allegro giocoso. There are more than a dozen sections to this lengthy movement. The Quartet must be considered one of the more important early modern pieces of Hungarian chamber music, very different from what Bartok was doing. As such, it deserves to be heard. The work is not particularly difficult from a technical standpoint and not beyond experienced amateurs but it will require work to put it together.



Charles Koechlin (1867-1950) was born in Paris and initially trained as an engineer before entering the Paris Conservatory where he studied with Gabriel Faure among others. He later became a close friend and collaborator of Faure's and wrote the first biography about him. Though he never held a permanent teaching position, he lectured and taught at several institutions including

the Schola Cantorum in Paris and the University of California at Berkeley. Among his many students were Germaine Tailleferre, Francis Poulenc and Cole Porter. He was a prolific composer who wrote in many different styles from the Baroque to modern day polytonalism and as such it is difficult to characterize his music as belonging to any one style.

His **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.51** appeared in 1921 although scholars believe in was finished in 1913. In the pastoral sounding first movement, Allegro moderato, he writes in the time signature of 6/4 + 1/2 and then later in 3/4 and 3/2. The meter is continually changing and offers a good opportunity to improve a groups ensemble work. The pleasant Scherzo which follows offers the same opportunities, rhythmically speaking as well as practice for quick changes from pizzicato to arco. The use of fifths is especially charming. The Andante quasi adagio which comes next is tonally attractive and atmospheric while the finale, Allegro con moto, is a modern descendant of Haydn and Mozart and has an especially pleasing lyrical subject. Despite its challenges, this is a work which is pleasing to play, It could be brought to the concert hall and is not beyond good amateurs.

String Quartet No.2, Op.57 was completed in 1916. It was never premiered and it became his First Symphony. It is an experimental work in which specific ideas are explored in each movement. While some perhaps will find it an interesting work, in my opinion, neither concert audiences nor amateurs, if they are able to navigate it, will find it to their taste.

String Quartet No.3, Op.72 appeared in 1921. He has abandoned his urge to experiment and the opening movement, Tres calm, sound like traditional French Impressionist music of the first decade of the 20th century. The second movement, Scherzo, is playful again show the influence of Impressionism mixed with polytonal elements. The Adagio which comes next has a deadening effect. Little happens. The finale is more appealing and effective. This is an okay work, certainly more approachable than No.2, but I would not consider it either for concert or home.



Hans Koessler (1853-1926) was born in the town of Waldbeck in Upper Bavaria. He studied organ and composition with Joseph Rheinberger in Munich, holding a number of positions in Germany before moving to Hungary to become Professor of Organ, Composition and Choral direction at the Music Academy of Budapest in the early 1880's. He stayed there until his retirement in 1908. Bartok, Kodaly, Dohnanyi, Leo Weiner and

Imre Kalman were all among his many students and he was widely regarded as the finest teacher of composition in Austria-Hungary during the 1890's and the first part of the 20th century. His first string quartet was never published in that form and eventually came out as his string quintet.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor appeared in 1902, however, it was composed at least a decade, if not two, before it was published. Koessler tried in this work to describe his feelings of leaving his home for a new life and position in Hungary. The first movement, *Allegro moderato* expresses the struggle between his affection for his German homeland and the lure of Budapest. The second movement, *Adagio*, brings forth the sadness he felt leaving family and friends behind, while the excitement and whirl of his new life is given vent in the *Scherzo* which follows. Shortly before the trio section, a dramatic recitative in the cello recalls what he has left behind. The finale is a set of fine variations. In it, again we find expressed his attraction to Hungary with its tinges of gypsy music here and there. This is a good work in the Brahmsian style. A good choice for concert performance, which can be warmly recommended to amateur players.



Information about the Polish composer **Charles de Kontsky** (born Karol Katski) is relatively scarce and much of the information which exists is often contradictory. He was born into a musical family in the Polish city of Krakow probably in 1815 although some sources say 1813. He studied violin and composition at to the General Music School in Warsaw. Subsequent to his studies, he toured giving violin and piano concerts in Lublin, Lvov, Vilnius, Moscow and St Petersburg where the Tsar, upon hearing him play, awarded him a generous stipendium. After the unsuccessful Polish uprising of 1831, he and his family emigrated to Paris and took the surname de Kontski as his professional name. There he earned his living by composing and teaching. Eventually, his works came to the attention not only of French audiences but also musicians in Paris.

String Quartet No.1 in D major was published in 1862, but appears to have been composed a couple of decades earlier, perhaps around 1840 at which time de Kontsky was unknown and unable to get his works published. The first movement opens with a short, sorrowful *Adagio* introduction which leads to the main section, an upbeat and lively *Allegro*. The second movement, *Andante quasi allegretto*, is a kind of pastoral sounding *Siciliano*. Next comes a graceful *Minuetto* with an interesting dialog between the viola and cello. The nicely contrasting trio section is an Austrian *Ländler*. The finale, *Allegretto*, is a showcase for Kontsky's superb compositional skills with its seamless changes of tempo and even a fugal section, as well as an exciting and rather operatic coda a la Rossini. With its appealing melodies and excellent part-writing, this quartet can be recommended to concert performance and to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor probably was written about the same time as No.1. It opens with a dramatic and turbulent *Allegro con brio*. More lyrical singing interludes provide a nice contrast. The second movement, *Andante con molto il sentimento* is a beautiful song without words. Next is a bright, busy *Scherzo*. The finale, *Allegretto*, has the semblance of a legend. A good work but I think not for concert but certain for amateurs.

Very little information is available about the Polish composer **Janusz de Kopczynski**. Even his dates of birth and death are not certain. French sources state he was born in 1831 but the Polish National Library lists him as being born in 1838. As for his death, the Polish National Library notes it was after 1882, perhaps 1883. He was born on the estate of his family near Horokhiv in western Ukraine. From his surname, we can deduce that he was part of

the Polish nobility. He studied piano with Ignacy Platon Kozłowski, a student of John Field. Some time in the 1850s, he subsequently traveled to Paris where he studied piano and composition with the piano virtuoso Charles Valentin Alkan.

His **String Quartet in D Major, On Russian Themes** was not published until 1912 when it was brought out by the Polish firm of Anton Piwarski of Cracow. From the cover, which is in French, it is listed as his first string quartet and it is subtitled *On Russian Themes*. It is unknown if he wrote a second. Though published in 1912, it seems unlikely that it was composed anytime around then. Rather, judging from the style, its opus number, and the cover which is in French despite the fact that the music was engraved in Germany and published Poland, makes it seem more likely that the Quartet was composed sometime in the 1860s or early 1870s, perhaps while Kopczynski was still in France. Of course it is possible, though unlikely, that Kopczynski could still have been alive in 1912, but he would have been near or in his 80s and few composers were active so late. Kopczynski's quartet is in four movements and each movement is based on one or more well-known Russian folk melodies. Right from the opening bars of the first movement, *Allegro moderato*, comes a stately, famous Russian folk tune. After its development a jaunty melody, obviously another Russian folk melody, appears. The second movement, *Andante*, is a theme and set of variations. The lovely theme is sad and plaintive. The variations are interesting and well-done. Next comes a lively *Presto* prefaced by a short, slower introduction. The finale, a *Rondo Allegro vivo*, like the preceding movement, begins with a brief, slow introduction, *Un poco con moto e sostenuto*. The theme in the *Allegro* is a bright, charming Russian peasant dance. An occasional concert performance would be justified and certainly this will give amateurs a lot of pleasure. It is fun to play, not at all hard and sounds good with each part getting good treatment.



Although **Alexander Kopylov** (1854-1911) began his studies at the Imperial Court Choir which was similar and modeled after the more famous one in Vienna. (Today known as the Vienna Boys Choir). There he studied violin and served as a chorister. Later, he taught there for much of his life. Although he was unable to gain entrance to either of the major Conservatories in Russia, he nevertheless was able to study composition privately with Rimsky-Korsakov and Anatoly

Liadov. He gained a reputation as a Symphonist, and composer of songs, but through his friendship with Rimsky Korsakov, he became interested in chamber music, writing four string quartets, all were carefully and show an outstanding command of proper quartet style. He gives all of the instruments mutually rich parts to play, alternating in exquisite fashion. His excellence is particularly strong in the sparkling themes in which he combines the external beauty of form with effective ideas and distinctive harmonies and rhythms.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.15 dates from 1890 and shows the influence of Rimsky-Korsakov's teaching in that the music is clearly of the Russian nationalist school. From start to finish, this is a very Russian sounding work, quintessentially Russian. The *Moderato* introduction to the first movement, *Allegro*, opens with a richly tonal melody right out of the Russian Orthodox liturgy. The themes to the *Allegro*, however, are brighter, alternating between forward drive and playfulness. The second movement begins *Presto*, but this is merely an introduction to the *Allegretto* which follows. It is an elvish dance. The stunning third movement, *Andante*, is reminiscent of the famous slow movement to Borodin's Second Quartet but some ways even better--extraordinary beauty and power combined. The finale, *Allegro*, has features lively and bright Russian sailor dances to funeral dirges. An outstanding quartet by any measure. Of no great

technical difficulty, this work will surely be an concert audience pleaser and should not be missed by amateur groups.

His **String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.23** was published in 1894 and dedicated to the memory of Tchaikovsky. It begins with an elegiac, Allegretto introduction which is followed by an Allegro. The first theme is introspective while the second is a passionate dirge. The bright Scherzo which follows completely changes the mood. However, in the slower trio section, the mood once again darkens. The third movement, an Andante, is clearly a funereal song of mourning. Particularly striking is the Moderato middle section with in which the cello brings forth a consoling melody over an accompaniment played in fifths. At last, in the Allegro finale, the mood lifts and there is no hint of grief in the dance rhythms which dominate the music. Another good work, though a little harder to play than the first.

String Quartet No.3 in A Major, Op.32 was published in the year after his death in 1912, although most likely it was composed during the late 1890's. The opening movement, Allegro risoluto immediately introduces a fresh and appealing theme which is followed by a more lyrical subject played over a chromatic ostinato in the viola. The second movement is a lively, spirited Scherzo, a kind of updated Mendelssohnian affair with a slower middle section full of Russian charm. A slow movement, Andante, follows. Here the first violin sings a plaintive song over a heavy, almost funereal accompaniment in the lower voices. The finale, Allegro ma non troppo, features a rustic folk dance full of forward motion for its main subject. Here and there, for example, in the second theme we hear echoes of Borodin. Another first rate work. Good for concert and home.

String Quartet No.4 in C Major, Op.33 was also published in 1912, but again, it is unlikely that it was composed any time after 1905. The opening Allegro, which is clearly written, is based on a very simple but fetching Russian folk melody. The second movement an Allegro scherzo, it is a real showcase, but requires players with an almost virtuoso technique. There is a finely contrasting elegiac trio section. This is followed by a lovely Allegretto with very Russian subject matter. The opening victorious theme to the finale, Allegro risoluto, is so densely scored as to sound orchestral. Several beautiful side themes bring contrast. Another very fine work for concert and home.



Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) was born in the Moravian city of Brunn then part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire (today Brno in the Czech Republic). He grew up in Vienna where his father was a music critic for one of Vienna's leading papers. Recognizing his son's extraordinary talent, Korngold's father took him to see Mahler when the boy was nine. Mahler declared him a genius and other noteworthy musicians such as Humperdinck and Richard Strauss held that he was the greatest child prodigy since Mozart. Mahler saw to it that Korngold studied with Vienna's best teachers—Robert Fuchs, Hermann Grädener and Alexander Zemlinsky. Korngold became one of Europe's leading operatic and instrumental composers and conductors and subsequently served as a professor of composition at the Vienna Conservatory. In the 1930's he was invited to Hollywood and thereafter became one of the leading film composers of his time. After 1946, he left the film industry to concentrate on composing absolute music. He wrote three string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major, Op.16 was written over a three year period and completed in 1923. It opens Allegro molto with the music of modern tension, tonally quite advanced, but soon gives way to lyricism. The Adagio quasi fantasia is one long song, where the use of extensive double-stopping creates a very rich texture. An Intermezzo really in the guise of a scherzo fol-

lows. Light and quick, it has great charm and makes an immediate impression through the effective use of pizzicati and mutes. The Finale begins in a very relaxed manner but then gives way to a pizzicato accented march. The mood is sunny but pastoral. Though a movement of great breadth it lacks dramatic tension. It is of moderate difficulty and not beyond good amateurs. It is strong enough for concert performance.

String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major, Op.26 came in 1933. Very modern sounding, but still a composer who does not wish to abandon traditional tonality in its entirety. The opening Allegro alternates between geniality and a nervousness. The second movement, Intermezzo, is entirely traditionally tonal and quite stunning. The third movement, Larghetto, is mysterious and then calm and reflective. The finale, Tempo di Waltz, is an updated, modern sounding, but still identifiable Viennese waltz. This quartet is more approaching than the first and would do better with concert audiences. Still within the range of good amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in D Major, Op.33 was completed just as WWII was ending in 1945. The opening Allegro moderato sounds much more modern and of greater complexity than the earlier quartets. Not allegro, but slow and aimless without direction, suddenly tension builds with a long spiraling downward passage. There is little of the composer's legendary lyricism in this movement though there is an unmistakable sense of striving as it melts away into nothingness. The superb Scherzo-Allegro molto is much more coherent. It is characterized by strong forward motion, which then gives way to a lyrical trio, the theme of which was taken from one of his movie scores. The third movement is marked Sostenuto, Like A Folksong and is just that, a simple quiet melody, briefly interrupted by a stormy middle section. The finale opens with several very strident chords but then gives way to an exciting tonal theme of driving speed which dominates this very fine movement to its effective ending. Although this is a work of advanced difficulty, it does not sound like it would be beyond the ability of proficient amateurs and perhaps could be brought into the concert hall.

Mikhail Kourbanov (sometimes Kourbanoff or Kurbanov 1857-1941) was a man of many talents. He was a naval officer, like his teacher Rimsky Korsakov, an electrical engineer and a musician. Kourbanov wrote very little music and is remembered mostly for his memoirs of the Belaiev Circle of composers—Rimsky Korsakov, Glazunov, Liadov and Borodin. Belaiev, a millionaire, amateur violist and chamber music enthusiast was the founder of probably the most famous regular string quartet gatherings ever held—Les Vendredis or Fridays—the evening on which his quartet met to perform at his mansion after which a massive banquet was always served. These weekly gatherings continued from the early 1880's until 1903 just before his death. Belaiev used his millions to found a publishing firm whose sole purpose was to publish the music of Russian composers. Anyone who was anybody in the Russian musical world, including such luminaries as Tchaikovsky, Taneyev, Glazunov, Borodin, Rachmaninov and Gliere to name but a very few—sooner or later attended these gatherings and often brought a composition with them to be performed by Belaiev's string quartet. Playing first violin, for many years in the Belaiev Quartet was none other than Mikhail Kurbanov, a fine violinist by all accounts. Kurbanov had been a very close friend of Borodin who had died in 1887.

His **Souvenir d'Alexandre Borodine**, an elegy for string quartet, was published in 1915 nearly 30 years after his friend's death. However, it composed it in the early 1890's. In one movement, the music recalls not only that of the Borodin but of the tonal world of Rimsky Korsakov and the Belaiev Circle. Only slightly tinged with sadness, the music is a reverent tribute and includes the melody from the aria The lament of Jaroslawnna from Borodin's opera Prince Igor. It makes a fine elegy where a musical tribute is required but also can serve as an encore.



Leopold Kozeluch (also Kozeluh, Kotzeluch 1747-1818) was born in the small town of Velvary some 20 miles distant from Prague. He was named Jan Antonin at birth, but in his mid teens changed his name to Leopold to distinguish himself from his cousin who was a fairly well-known Czech musician. Although Kozeluch received musical training from his cousin and from Franz Dussek (Frantisek Duscek), son of

the famous virtuoso pianist, his parents sent him to Prague University to study law. However, like so many other would-be lawyers before and after him, Kozeluch opted for a career in music after the success of several ballets he wrote during the 1770's. In 1778 he moved to Vienna. A fine pianist, Kozeluch was able to attract several aristocratic students as well as Maria Theresia von Paradis, a composer of some note. When Mozart was dismissed by the Archbishop of Salzburg in 1781, Kozeluch was offered the position. But he turned it down point-blank. After Mozart's death, Kozeluch was appointed to the post of Kapellmeister and Court Composer for life. He composed six string quartets published in two sets of three. They are, for the time, good, solid works, but no one would mistake them for those of either Haydn or Mozart. Nor can they compare with the best works of those of other contemporaries then active in Vienna, to wit Franz Krommer and the Wranitzky brothers Paul and Anton. Nonetheless, these quartets, composed between 1790 and 1791, show that Kozeluch had assimilated certain important advances made by Haydn and Mozart which few others had, the most important being that they are not written in a concertante style but reflect the new style, pioneered by Haydn, which integrated the four voices. Kozeluch published his quartets himself in 1791, having started a publishing house, Musikalisches Magazin, in 1784. Besides his own compositions, his firm also published several of Mozart works. One might assume they were written one after the other but perhaps there was some interval between them. In any event, the Op.33 are the stronger of the sets although the Op.32 are not without their individual charms.

String Quartet No.1 in B Flat Major, Op.32 No.1 is, as are all of Kozeluch's quartets, in three movements. The first, Allegro, begins with a pleasant if unremarkable tune in the first violin. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the development is more interesting, often exciting, and shows in several places the tonal influence of Mozart. While the first violin is clearly primus inter pares, Kozeluch gives both the viola and cello the running passage work, which characterizes the Allegro, on several occasions. The second movement, a pleasant Andantino, is played muted. This, along with the considerable use made of the cello, gives the music some added depth, but it must be admitted, Kozeluch is not able to infuse the rather tame opening theme with much emotion. He seems to have eschewed the use of either minuets or scherzi and thus structurally his quartets follow the older three movement fast-slow-fast Mannheim pattern. In the finale Rondo Allegretto, he surprises with quite a fetching main theme. The development, while generally good, has some rather busy and not particularly easy triplet passages which are passed from voice to voice. The entire quartet is characterized by an absence of clearly identifiable second themes. Rather, there are lengthy developments and extended bridge passages. Sometimes this works rather neatly, but not always. While I don't think it deserves revival in the concert hall, this quartet will give amateur groups with a strong first violinist looking for music from the middle classical period. When quartets were published in sets of three or six, it was generally the practice of the publisher to put what was considered the weaker quartets in the middle and the strongest first and last.

However in the case of Kozeluch's **String Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.32 No.2**, this is not the case. The writing, from the very beginning of the pleasant Allegro, shows a surer grasp of the

then emerging modern quartet style. The opening theme, though led by the first violin, is harmonically underpinned by all of the voices. The second movement, Poco adagio, is very fine. Though in part a vocal lied for the first violin, the prayer-like melody is quite effective. There are several other touches, such as a response duet between the first violin and cello, which are also quite telling. The main theme to the finale, Rondo, Allegro, is clearly based on a folk tune. The fast passage work is not always convincing, still on the whole, this is a good quartet, but it is hard to make an argument that this work should be placed on the concert stage, but again, amateurs will certainly enjoy it.

String Quartet No.3 in E Flat Major, Op.32 No.3 begins with a Haydnesque Moderato, whose main theme is rather prosaic to say the least. But interest is immediately added by the triplet passages in the first violin while the other voices soldier on with the main theme until the dramatic second theme finally makes its appearance. The second movement, Adagio, is, more or less, a very long but beautiful solo for the first violin. The others do have a supporting role to play and occasionally the cello is used. The buoyant finale, Allegro, actually has 3 themes and some rather good development sections. The first theme sets the mood for the rest. Again the first violin has rather a large part, but the others, and especially the cello, are not forgotten. This is probably the best quartet of the set and, given that we still hear Haydn's Op.17 in concert, is strong enough to be put on the stage. Stylistically, it is impossible to say that the second set, the Op.33, show any advance over the earlier works. It is frustratingly difficult to categorize these works. In some respects they are no more advanced than those of Stamitz and other composers of the Mannheim School. This is most apparent during long stretches where only the first violin is given the thematic and or melodic material and where the writing for it almost approaches the nature of a solo. At other times, Kozeluch produces astonishingly up-to-date effects which show that he had assimilated most of the advances made by Haydn and Mozart. At such moments, his work prefigures early Beethoven. This would put him in that small group of those few composers who had understood and used these advances in their own music. Like his fellow countrymen, the Wranitzkys and Franz Krommer, Kozeluch was often able to come up with clever and unusual turns of phrase, though on the whole, it would not be fair to say that his quartets can in anyway compare with the best of those composers. The term uneven is the inevitable judgment one makes after playing them.

There is no better illustration of the above proposition than that of his **String Quartet No.4, Op.33 No.1 in C Major**. The genial opening theme is prosaic and not particularly memorable. The first violin is given virtually all of the thematic responsibility although the other three voices are occasionally allowed to restate the theme. Then, just when you are convinced that the movement is going to be nothing but ordinary, he suddenly produces an original and interesting section worthy of Paul Wranitzky. First played by the violins in thirds against a simple, but surprisingly effective accompaniment in the lower voices. Then the pattern is reversed and viola and cello are given the lead. The effect is all the more striking when contrasted with what has come before. But, even these episodes cannot raise the overall impression of the movement above ordinary. By contrast, the second movement, Poco largo, is extraordinarily powerful. After a more or less unison introduction, the music gets underway with the first violin playing a dramatic solo. After it completes the phrase, the cello answers it. All of this takes place against the pulsing 8th notes in the other voices. There was nothing at all like this in the literature up to this point except for the magnificent slow movement in Haydn's Op.20 No.2 quartet. The finale, Andante con variazione—Allegro, begins with a rather ordinary theme which seems to require playing at a tempo faster than a normal andante. The variations alternate from rather ordinary to quite good. Recommended for amateurs with a good first violinist.

String Quartet No.5 in A Major, Op.33 No.2 is only in two movements. It begins *Un poco vivace*. Again, the main theme is “nothing to write home about.” The pedestrian opening theme is partially saved from reaching the level of boring by another very effective orchestral interlude, sounding much like the works written by Haydn decades before during his *Sturm und Drang* period. Amid pulsing 8th note sextuplets, the first violin brings forth a dramatic melody. Although the part-writing is relatively good, in the end, it must be admitted that this movement is far too long for the thematic material presented and, for once, the coda does not come to the rescue. The concluding movement starts off with a very good, moody 20 measure *Andante* introduction but to be really effective, it must be played *adagio* and not *andante*. If the repeats are taken, and they should be, then it becomes a middle movement, which I am sure is what Kozeluch must have intended. This leads, *attacca*, to an excellent *Allegro*. The main theme and Kozeluch’s treatment of it are, for once, the equal of the best of Paul Wranitzky’s efforts. The thematic material finds its way to all of the voices and the movement is brimming with of clever effects. In the middle, the *Andante*, makes a dramatic and telling reprise before Kozeluch brings the movement to an exciting finish. Good for amateurs, perhaps for concert.

String Quartet No.6 in F Major, Op.33 No.6 is Kozeluch’s last venture into the realm of the string quartet and arguably his best. The opening theme to the first of its three movements, *Allegro*, while hardly of the highest caliber, nonetheless, holds one’s interest and certainly is a cut above those themes he uses in his other opening movements. Its development, shared by the first violin and cello, is particularly fine. Again we have a movement which is too long and involves too much repetition of the thematic material which is on offer. This would not be as noticeable if there were more of it. In the second movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, Kozeluch reaches into his bag of melodies and pulls out a lovely theme which is only entrusted to the first violin. The cello is given some accompaniment of interest but the middle voices are bereft of interest until well into the development. Kozeluch saves the best for last and this finale, *Allegretto—Scherzando*, is really first rate. The lively Czech dance, which as the main theme, is in the best tradition of the Wranitzkys. There is no doubt that this quartet is strong enough to justify performance in the concert hall. Whether this is likely to happen outside of the Czech Republic is highly questionable since we never even hear anything of the Wranitzkys or Krommer. To sum up, these string quartets are not a huge treasure trove of masterworks. On the other hand, some of these works are really very good and though all are not uniformly good, each has its moments and can certainly be recommended to amateurs without hesitation.



Joseph Martin Kraus (1756-92) was born in the German town of Miltenberg am Main. He studied violin and piano from a number of local teachers. In 1778 at the age of 21, he moved to Sweden to make his fortune for the Swedish king was known as a great music lover. He eventually succeeded in gaining the king's favor and was given the chance to travel abroad at the king's expense. During this trip he met Gluck, Albrechtsberger, Mozart and Haydn, all of whom were impressed by his music. Some scholars believe that he may have studied with Haydn. In any case, Haydn's quartets clearly served as Kraus' model, although Kraus did not slavishly copy the Master. For example, Kraus rarely adopted the four movement format that Haydn used. Many of Kraus' quartets were after his death given names by his publisher such as *The Hunt*, *The Farewell* or *The Spring Quartet*. The numbering of the quartets is also not his and perhaps not accurate. It is thought he wrote 10 quartets, several still in manuscript. The names given to his quartets by his publisher were not origi-

nal, it is the only way to identify some of them. The names of the 7 quartets are: *Bratschen* (No.2), *Fugen* (No.3) *Abschieds* (No.4), *Fruhlings* (No.5), *Schottisches* (No.6), *Jagd and Göttinger*.

His **String Quartet No.2 in B Major, “Bratschenquartett”** is so named for the prominence of the viola part in the slow movement. The opening *Allegro moderato* speaks the musical language of early Haydn. It is accomplished but the melodic material is unremarkable. The following *Adagio* is a lovely, Haydn-esque 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. It is not suitable for the concert stage although amateurs will enjoy it.

String Quartet No.4 in D Major, “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 the publisher 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 Major “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 not for the concert hall.

String Quartet No.6 in G, Major “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 second movement, *Scozzese, 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 a performance in concert.

The **Jagdquartett (Hunt Quartet) in C Major** 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. The publisher 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.



Stephan Krehl (1864-1924) was born in Leipzig. He first studied painting then art history and finally piano and composition with the famous teacher Johann Rischbieter, whose nickname was "counterpoint incarnate", which in no small part accounts for the excellence of his compositional technique. After completing his studies, he taught composition at the conservatories in Karlsruhe and Leipzig. Krehl's music was

of the language of the late romantics. He rejected the new directions that Bartok and Schoenberg were taking and his music, like that of so many other fine composers, disappeared from the concert stage after the First World War, when new tastes rejected romanticism and all but the most famous romantic composers.

The **String Quartet in A Major, Op.17** dates from 1899 and was dedicated to the Meiningen String Quartet, then one of the best known quartets in Europe. The opening movement Allegro begins in unison, with all four players bringing forth a genial, warm subject. The second theme is more jolly and energetic. The second movement, Lento, has for its main theme a doleful melody first brought forth by the cello. All are muted and this creates an air of mystery and quietude. Eventually the music rises to a dramatic climax full of passion. Next comes a lively Vivace, which serves as a sort of updated Mendelssohnian scherzo. In the big Moderato finale, once again, the cello brings forth the initial theme, a serious, dignified melody. As each voice enters tension rises. This is a first rate work deserving concert performance and available to good amateur players.



Alexander Krein (1883-1951) was the son of a well-known Klezmer musician. He entered the Moscow Conservatory at fourteen, taking composition lessons from Sergei Taneyev. Subsequently, he joined the Society for Jewish Folk Music and began to weave Hebraic melodies into the format of orthodox chamber works.

The **Poém for String Quartet, Op.9** was composed in 1909 during a period when

Krein was much taken with Scriabin's novel use of harmonic combinations as well as his ethereal form of expression. While the work is in one movement, it is comprised of several individual episodes and is as substantial as a typical string quartet. It has a straight forward, simple melodic line which Krein combines with pungent harmonies. This is a grateful work for the performer by reason of its frank and unadorned but lyrical melodies. Unlike many of his other works, the Poém makes no use of Hebrew melodies, but combines the method of Scriabin with the romantic expression of the French impressionists. A fine period work which is both suitable for concert as well as for amateur groups.



How many people know that **Fritz Kreisler** (1875-1963) the famous violinist and composer of works for violin and piano wrote a string quartet--and a very good one too. That it is good is really no surprise, not only because Kreisler was a talented composer, but also because he was a regular string quartet player. Of course, it does not sound anything like his sweet morsels such as Liebesfreud or Schön Rosmarin.

Kreisler's **String Quartet in a minor** was completed in 1922. In the preceding decade, there had been many new and, some would say, shocking developments in music. Those who, as Kreisler, rejected the atonalism of Schönberg and his Second Vienna School, could no longer write in the idiom of Brahms. New ways had to be found. Composers such as Dohnanyi, Weigl,

Weiner, Stravinsky, to name but a few, all struck out in different directions, while retaining some aspects of traditional tonalism. Many critics have considered Kreisler's quartet to be programmatic and autobiographical as was Smetana's From My Life. Kreisler, however, never openly admitted this although he did tell his biographer, "It is my tribute to Vienna.", his birthplace. The opening movement, Allegro moderato but also titled Fantasia, immediately strikes a note of tragic drama with the opening cello solo. The main part of the movement does not turn out to be tragic but nonetheless has an eerie aura and gives off a haunted sense. The tonality of the following Scherzo, Allegro vivo con spirito, has a waywardness about it as the music dances along, literally bursting with energy. The languid trio section provides a mighty contrast. A slow movement, Andante con moto, also has a title: Introduction and Romance. The music is poignant and portrays an aching or a yearning for something lost. In main theme of the finale, has a rhythmic gaiety to it. It is an updated version of a Viennese dance tune. Slowly the music builds to a huge dramatic climax which is capped by the restatement of the tragic utterance of the opening cello solo. The music ends peacefully on a quiet note. Perhaps eulogizing the gay Vienna of the closing decades of the Habsburg Empire, which was destroyed forever by the First World War. This quartet is truly a modern masterwork. That it did not achieve the fame it deserved and was not taken seriously can only be due to the fact that its composer was a violin virtuoso known for writing effective encore pieces. It deserves to be heard in concert and can be recommended to experienced amateurs.



Emil Kreuz (1865-1932) was born in the German town of Elberfeld. He began playing violin at an early age and at age sixteen he won a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music in London. His violin teacher was the well-known British soloist Henry Holmes and his composition teacher was Charles Villiers Stanford. Eventually he concentrated on performing on the viola and in England, where he settled for the rest of his life became known as a leading viola soloist as well as a member of some of Britain's finest string quartets. In later life, he pursued a career as an opera conductor. Additionally, he composed several chamber works, including a fair number for viola.

His **String Quartet in d minor, Op.42** dates from 1895 and was dedicated to his fellow members of his performing string quartet. It was premiered by his quartet with him on viola in 1896. Despite stellar reviews, it soon disappeared from the concert stage. The opening movement, Allegro impetuoso, sounds as if beginning mid phrase. The themes show the influence of Brahms and the late German Romantic movement. The stately and somewhat sad second movement, Adagio, has a song-like, lyrical feel to it. Third comes a bright, playful Presto. The finale, a genial and triumphant sounding Allegro vivace concludes the quartet. Though well-written, it has no real original qualities, just another late Romantic era quartet. Okay for amateurs but not for concert.



Franz Krommer (1759-1831), was born in town of Kamnitz then part of the Habsburg Austrian Empire, today Kamenice in the Czech Republic. It had a mixed population of Germans and Czechs and though baptized František Vincenc Kramář, by the time he was 15, Krommer began using the Germanized version of his name for the rest of his life. It was the name by which he became known to the world. Krommer was one of the most successful composers in Vienna at the beginning of the 19th Century. Yet, there is no listing for him in the huge

Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians. And in Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music, one is given little information. Rather the editor feels bound to repeat a derogatory "smear" attributed to Schubert. "*How can anyone play such stuff?*" little Franz was reputed to have remarked after purportedly being forced to play one of Krommer's symphonies while a student at the Imperial Music Academy in Vienna. He almost certainly never said anything like that or held such an opinion given that we know he often chose to play some of Krommer's quartets along with his own early efforts at home with his family string quartet. The entry from the New Grove is somewhat better. Here, we learn that Krommer was by the late 1790s one of the most successful composers then active in Vienna. This remained so right up until his death in 1831. His reputation was attested to by the fact that his works were frequently republished throughout Germany, England, France, Italy, Scandinavia and the United States. Contemporary critics, writing after Mozart's death, regularly noted that Krommer, along with Haydn, was the leading composer of chamber music. Here is but one of many examples of what was being written: "*Franz Krommer of Vienna is not only an outstandingly good violinist but also one of the best loved composers as witnessed by the number of copies of his works which have been printed and gone through several editions. Mr Krommer boasts such a wealth of original ideas, wit, fire, novel harmonic turns that he will easily attract and capture the attention of quartet lovers now that Haydn's name is no longer to be found in the list of new published works.*"—Neues historisch-Lexikon der Tonkünstler. (The New Historical Dictionary of Composers, 1805) As another critic wrote "*Every violinist can learn something from Krommer. He knew how to write for string instruments and as a result what he wrote sounds brilliant.*"

Krommer came to Vienna around 1785. For the following 10 years he held appointments at various aristocratic courts in Hungary. He returned to Vienna in 1795 where he remained until his death, holding various positions including that of Court Composer (Hofmusiker) to the Emperor, Franz I, with whom he often played string quartets. There are more than 300 compositions which were at one time or another published, much of which is chamber music. And certainly no chamber music enthusiast should miss playing his delightful works. He wrote at least 70 string quartets. While this may seem like rather a lot, it was in fact typical for the time. Haydn, for example, wrote 83. Ironically, it is Krommer's works for winds which are the only ones, until recently that have been recorded and performed. Few 18th Century composers wrote better for winds than Krommer, a violinist! Until recently, there was only one string quartet of his in print, Op.5 No.1, which was available from Musica Antiqua Bohemica. However, this situation has since been remedied and as of the current writing (2023), Edition Silvertrust has made 29 of his quartets available, several in new editions, others reprints of early editions. I will not treat each one of these in depth but will discuss what I consider to be the most noteworthy at length and merely touch on the others. Before I begin, I should like to emphasize that every string quartet player should get to know at least some of Krommer's fine and original sounding quartets. Though a contemporary of both Mozart and Haydn, he in no way sounds like either. He has his own original and easily identifiable sound and style. After making the acquaintance of the quartets of Mozart and Haydn, quartet players would do well to investigate the treasure trove of Krommer's oeuvre. When it came to string quartets, publishers throughout the 18th century generally expected composers to provide them with sets of either three or six. Krommer stuck to this practice throughout his life and nearly all of his quartets were published in sets of three.

His first nine quartets, the **Opp.1, 3,4** are all written in concertante style, that is to say, each instrument is given solos over a simple accompaniment in the other voices. Also, these quartets are only in three movements, generally lacking a minuet or scher-

zo. This three movement style was a holdover from the Mannheim School that Haydn originally adopted and then used to create the so called Vienna Classical Style which typically had four movements. Krommer did not adopt this style until the mid 1790's with the appearance of his Op.5 string quartets. They were published in the early 1790s but probably were composed in the mid-late 1780s shortly after Krommer arrived in Vienna. This can be deduced from the fact that the quartets do not bear any dedications. By the mid 1790s, Krommer had established himself and had many friends and patrons among the nobility. His works from this period on generally bear a dedication to some count, duke or prince. One would, of course, expect that the solos for the first violin would not only dominate affairs, but also would require a player of very high technical accomplishment. But what is noteworthy about these early quartets is the fact that the solos given to the cello and viola, though not prominent, nonetheless require players of very good technical ability. The Opp.1,3 and 4 have not received modern editions and only one has been reprinted and made available.

Op.4 No.2 in E flat Major opens with a genial Allegro vivace. The cello is given solos in its treble register. The viola and second violin are also given short solos.. The middle movement, an Andante, is a theme and set of variations, a technique that Krommer, like Haydn, often used for his slow movements. There is no minuet or scherzo. The finale is an energetic Allegro. This quartet is a typical example what you find in the first nine quartets, before Krommer had assimilated the newly emerging style. They are tuneful, appealing works which are fun to play and will not disappoint. The third quartet of his Opus 5 shows that Krommer was adopting this newer style. All three of the quartets are still primarily concertante works and the first two only have three movements, nonetheless, these three are clearly the best quartets of his first twelve.

In **Op.5 No.1 in E flat Major** the two outer movements, the opening Allegro moderato and the Rondo finale, are written in concertante style. The middle movement, an Allegretto, is written in a more updated style which Haydn and Mozart had pioneered. It is a lovely theme and set of variations with a Hungarian flavor. Other than the first violin part, it is not technically challenging.

Op.5 No.2 in F Major begins with a pleasant Allegro moderato in which the cello and the viola are given substantial solos which require players of very good technical ability. The middle movement is a delicate Adagio. The tricky main theme of the playful Rondo finale is passed from voice to voice. The middle section has a dramatic resposion between the violin and cello.

Op.5 No.3 in B flat Major is the first of Krommer's quartets to have four movements. It begins with a stately Allegro with the cello given the lovely main theme. Soon the violin takes it. As the rhythm changes the tempo picks up. The quartet goes in and out of concertante style, wherein one instrument will have a solo while the others play straight forward accompaniment. But at other times it uses a Haydnesque treatment of harmony. The solos are particularly fine, each with beautiful and fresh-sounding melodies. The overall effect is brilliant. Next comes a fetching Adagio in which the first violin sings a medley of charming melodies. Later, the second violin takes over, then the cello and viola get their turns. This is followed a typically Viennese Menuetto, allegretto. The finale, a rousing, toe tapping Rondo features several unisono episodes. The Op.5 No.1 probably would make the strongest impression on a concert audience, however, Op.5 No.3 is also quite good. All can be recommended to amateurs.

His next set was his Opus 7 which appeared in 1797. These quartets served to establish his name and reputation throughout Europe. They were originally sold by several publishers in Germany, but also in France, Denmark and even the United States. They all have four movements, and from this point forward, Krommer never returned to the three movement format.

The opening movement to **Op.7 No.1 in C Major**, Allegro con brio, begins with a chirpy, energetic theme. Several 16th note passages add even more excitement to the affair. One immediately notices that the cello and viola are more generously treated than is typically found in either Haydn or Mozart's quartets. However what they are given is not virtuosic and can be managed by the average player. The second movement is a deep, heart felt Adagio. Next comes a Haydnesque Menuetto allegretto with a bumptious trio section. The quartet is topped off with a toe-tapping Rondo. This quartet has received an all new edition

.. **Op.7 No.2 in e minor** is noteworthy for the fact that it is in the minor which Krommer rarely used. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, begins in a deceptively slow fashion but soon the pace quickens with the use of several 16th note passages which add considerable excitement. The second movement, a leisurely Menuetto, allegretto, is a typical Viennese minuet much of the sort Haydn wrote. The lovely and contrasting trio section has a very romantic melody for its theme. Next comes a dignified Adagio with a fetching stately subject, which is followed by series of interesting variations. The nervous finale has no tempo marking and is simply marked Finale, but it is clearly an edgy presto, full of forward motion.

Op.7 No.3 in A Major begins with a series of down notes which serve as the first part of the main theme. Soon the cello and first violin engage in a to and fro. A long series of triplets a la Mozart enliven the rest of the movement. A Haydnesque Menuetto which comes next is typically Viennese. But the trio is quite original. Here the cello starts off with a series upward notes and is immediately answered by the first violin. The effect is of mini recitativs. The third movement, Adagio, is a theme and set of variations. The theme is noble but and quite leisurely. However, the variations are filled with filigree and ornaments as well as tempo changes which hold the listener's interest. The finale, Rondo, is lively and dance-like. Of the three No.1 is the strongest and would do well as replacement for a Haydn or Mozart. The Opus 7 was followed later in 1797 by his Op.10 one of the finest sets of quartets written in the last decade of the 18th century. In these quartets, Krommer abandoned the concertante style completely.

Op.10 No.1 in F Major begins in genial fashion with an Allegro moderato with the violin presenting a naïve melody over the cello's rhythmic eighth notes. Soon triplet passages in all of the voices pick up the pace. There is no slow movement, instead Krommer substitutes an Allegretto. Again, the opening is simplicity itself, with the cello given the lead. Then more dramatic episodes follow recalling Mozart. A Haydnesque Minuetto allegro comes next. Short and to the point, no surplusage, not a note is wasted. The finale, a Rondo, is an orderly and typical polonaise. This is a first rate work, certainly worthy of concert.

The main theme to the opening Allegro **Op.10 No.2 in B flat Major** in 6/8 begins in with the first violin presenting what is almost a downward scale. Krommer develops it quite ingeniously in such a way that one would never have suspected such a simple beginning could lead to what follows. An Adagio, though not so marked, is actually a theme with several fine variations. Next comes a Haydnesque Minuetto allegretto, chirpy and concise. The finale, Allegro, begins rather like the opening movement, but this time the downward theme is lengthier and flowing. The music moves forward effortless with several charming episodes. A good work, warmly recommended to amateur groups.

Op.10 No.3 in in G Major opens with an engaging Allegro moderato in typical Krommerian style with the cello bringing forth the first part of the main theme which is finished off by the first violin. A dialog between the two follows throughout this charming movement. Next comes a march-like Menuetto allegro which is both original sounding and quite unusual. In the trio section, the cello and first violin cleverly answer each other. An Andante serves as the slow movement and proceeds in halting fashion, creating a continual sense of unrest. The finale, a Rondo,

is another of Krommer's very appealing, top-tapping movements, which tops off a pleasant another absolutely first rate work which would certainly make a successful replacement for the inevitable Haydn or Mozart appearing on concert programs. While all three works of this set can be warmly recommended to amateurs, Op.10 Nos. 1 and 3 definitely belong in the repertoire and concert hall. All three have received new editions.

The next set of three, Op.16 appeared in 1800. They were dedicated to Count Maurice de Fries also Moritz von Fries, head of the biggest bank in Austria. A friend and supporter of Beethoven who dedicated his Op.29 String Quintet to Fries.

Op.16 No.1 in E flat Major begins is a bright Allegro vivace and features a theme in which trills are prominent played over a pulsing accompaniment. The Andante allegretto which comes next takes three notes and develops them in rather an interesting fashion and features a finely contrasting section in the minor. The third movement is a Haydnesque Menuetto, typically late eighteenth century Viennese. The spritely finale, Rondo, allegro, has a lively, bouncy melody, which again recalls Haydn.

Op.16 No.2 in F Major opens with an Allegro moderato with a relaxed, genial theme played by all four voices. There is the fragrance of Mozart. The second and third subject are given strong rhythmic accompaniment. The Andante which comes next has a flowing, constantly moving theme which is given a quasi variation treatment. The third movement is a Haydnesque Menuetto, very Viennese. The finale, Allegro. moderato, begins with a march-like theme, which again recalls Haydn. While these are solid works, they lack so many of the original touches one finds in many of his other quartets.

Published the same year, 1800, were his Opus 18 quartets, also dedicated to the aforementioned de Fries. **Op.18 No.1 in D Major** opens with a series of double stop chords in all the voices before the lively main theme of the Allegro vivace is given free reign. The music flows along effortlessly full of excitement and élan. A very Haydnesque Menuetto follows. The third movement, Adagio, is a true gem, as fine as any to be found in Haydn. The main theme to the finale, Allegro is somewhat ordinary not up to Krommer's usual ingenious final movements. Otherwise a rather good quartet.

The Allegro moderato to **Op.18 No.2 in A Major** features and interesting downward chromatic passage as the main subject which eventually morphs into a bright second theme. Next comes a singing Adagio which is followed by a typical Viennese Menuetto. The Finale is a lively Presto.

Op.18 No.3 in E flat Major begins with a Vivace. The etude-like main theme consists primarily of scale passages. Krommer takes this ordinary beginning and turns it into something quite interesting. The theme is hardly memorable, but the overall working out of it is excellent. The importance of each part here, vis a vis the thematic material, is entirely equal. Krommer places an Adagio next. Here, the first violin is given most of the thematic material, but again, the other voices are quite necessary to bring it off. An excellent, somewhat muscular Menuetto, allegretto follows. All four equally take part. The trio section is quite unusual. Typical for Krommer, he takes an etude-like passage and then turns it into something quite special and original. Here, Krommer shows off his expertise in cross string bowing at speed, and the first violinist is required to have a technique to match. The finale, Presto, sports melodies which are memorable and appealing, the part-writing is good and, as always with Krommer, there are many little original and telling touches that make the music very attractive. Structurally, the music resembles the type of which Haydn was fond. However, the music itself anticipates and sounds more like George Onslow. The off beats in the cello are absolutely required to give some idea of the music. There are many original episodes and one can confidently say that this movement alone would justify having Op.18 No.3 played in concert. The Quartet deserves to be heard because it shows what

other contemporary and original thinkers were able to accomplish alongside of Haydn and Mozart.

String Quartet in F Major, Op.19 No.2 is the second of a set of three quartets composed around 1800. It opens with a genial Allegro moderato characterized by long series of triplets in all of the voices. The second movement is a stately Adagio. Next comes a typical Viennese Menuetto, Allegretto. The finale is an upbeat Allegro. This is a solid work recommended for amateurs.

String Quartet in G Major, Op.23 was composed sometime between 1797 and 1799 and was published a few years later in Vienna around 1803. While nearly all of Krommer's were published in sets of three, Op.23 is a single quartet, and was published by itself and without a dedication, a sign that Krommer was particularly proud of this work and it is, in fact, a first rate quartet on a par with any of those from the time coming out of Vienna before 1800. In four movements, it opens with an engaging and upbeat Allegro con brio, brimming with good spirits. Next comes a Menuetto, allegretto, interesting by virtue of its emphasis on the third beat of each bar. The trio is particularly effective. The third movement is a set of variations. The work concludes with a Rondo moderato which begins with a fetching, toe tapping, finger snapping theme, but the second subject is a more robust, thumping Hungarian style tune, which reflects the many years Krommer spent in Hungary.

Op.24 No.1 in D Major is the first of a set of three which were composed in the mid 1790's and published in 1802. The quartet opens in unusual fashion with the cello taking the lead in the captivating Allegro vivace. A stately Adagio comes next followed by an original sounding Minuetto allegro in which the main themes are scale passages passed from voice to voice. It is coupled with a slower contrasting trio. The finale, Presto, is characterized by its almost non-stop whirling triplets.

The opening Allegro moderato to **Op.24 No.2 Quartet in E flat Major** brings to mind the first movement of Mozart's K.387 and provides yet another excellent example of his art. Next is a lovely, upbeat Romanza, with a catchy theme and fine set of variations, full of feeling. The Minuetto-Allegretto is as good as any of Haydn's and the finale, a Presto, is a real toe-tapper.

Op.24 No.3 in g minor opens with an appealing, energetic Allegro and features a wonderful resposion between the first violin and cello. It is followed by a lovely and deeply felt Adagio. Next comes a whirling Menuetto full of chromaticism for which Krommer was well-known. The trio is particularly effective. The rousing finale, Rondo alla Ungarese is a tip of the hat to his many Hungarian patrons. All three quartets of the Op.24 have received new editions. No.3 is the strongest and belongs in the concert hall. No.2 is also good enough for an occasional concert hall outing. No.1 is a solid work though not for the concert hall. All three are warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet in d minor, Op.34 No.2 is the second of a set completed in 1802 and published the following year. It was dedicated to Prince Joseph Franz von Lobkowitz, an amateur musician who played violin and cello quite well and a patron of several composers in Vienna, the most famous of which were Haydn and Beethoven. The work is in four movements. The pounding, opening bars of the first movement, Allegro vivace, recall Mozart but by the fourth measure when the music takes off, we are in pure Krommer Land with all of the twists and turns which made him so popular among chamber music players. Here and there, snippets of Mozart reappear. A hard driving Menuetto allegretto follows, not the sort of minuet to which one would dance. Next is a reflective Andante. The finale, Rondo, is a typical, lively toe-tapping affair. Strong enough for concert.

String Quartet in E flat Major, Op.48 No.1 is the first of a set of three dating from 1803. It is squarely in the late Viennese Classical style. It opens with a lively Mozartean Allegro con brio. Next comes a lyrical, meditative Adagio. In third place is a typically Viennese Menuetto followed by a rather fierce trio section,

which provides a fine contrast. The finale, an Allegro, is yet another toe-tapping affair of the sort which Krommer was a past-master. This work belongs in the repertoire and the concert hall.

The upbeat opening movement, Allegro vivace, to **String Quartet in C Major, Op.48 No.2** is filled with graceful and charming melodies. The Adagio which comes next, while in no way imitative, is reminiscent of the marvelous slow movement of Haydn's Op.20 No.2 quartet, and this is probably no accident as Mozart and especially Haydn, often served as Krommer's role models. This said, no one would mistake Krommer's music for that of either of those composers, as he has his own fresh and original style. The lively third movement, Minuetto, allegretto, has a running theme which is cleverly passed from voice to voice. The cello is particularly generously treated. The trio section is a lovely and typical Austrian ländler. The finale, a genial Allegretto, begins rather relaxed but picks up excitement as it moves alone. The first three movements of the quartet are really very fine but the finale is a bit of a let down and as such I cannot recommend it for concert but amateurs will enjoy it.

String Quartet in F Major, Op.50 No.1 is the first of a set of three which were composed around 1804. The opening Vivace begins with unison double stop chords in all the voices before the lively main theme is given free reign. The music flows along effortlessly. The Andante which follows, though not so marked is a set of variations. It begins in somewhat unorthodox fashion with the cello and viola given the theme in their lower registers. The second violin then comes in and finally the first with what is really the singing main subject. The Menuetto which follows is quite original and in some ways extraordinary, with wonderful chordal progressions and an excellently contrasting trio. The finale is a lively Rondo. A solid work.

String Quartet in f minor, Op.68 No.1 is the first of a set of three which were composed around 1809 and which were dedicated to the same Count Rasumovsky that Beethoven's Op.59 were. Krommer's, of course, was very different from Beethoven's as Krommer throughout his life remained true to the Vienna Classical models of Haydn and Mozart. Not surprisingly, contemporary accounts noted that Rasumovsky appreciated Krommer's quartets more than those of Beethoven whose emerging new style he did not understand. The opening Allegro moderato begins with a powerful theme in the first violin. There is much forward motion created by whirling, running passages in all of the voices. The Andante which follows, though not so marked is a set of variations, a favorite of method of writing slow movements used by Krommer. The lovely opening theme is taken through several interesting changes. The Menuetto, allegretto opens with a unison presentation of the spooky main theme. Accidents on the third beat keep things off balance and the use of trills adds to the suspense. The trio is calmer. A downward, plunging unison makes for immediate excitement which the concluding Allegro amply fulfills. Good enough for concert performance and because it was dedicated to the same Count Razumovsky as Beethoven's Op.59 is certain to be of interest to audiences.

String Quartet in C Major, Op.72 No.1, the first of a set of three, was completed around 1813 and is firmly in his Krommer's middle period which though still looking back at the Classical era, also looks forward to the early Romantic. His life spanned the Mannheim, Vienna Classical and early Romantic periods and his music, though primarily faithful to the Vienna Classical model did evolve somewhat over time. In four movements, the opening Allegro starts off in an almost pedestrian style, but soon original and captivating Krommerian touches can be heard as the movement develops. The lovely second movement, Adagio, is one long lyrical song. Next comes a Haydn-esque Menuetto, but the stormy and dramatic trio section is something Haydn would never have thought of. follows. The toe-tapping finale, Allegro vivace begins with the violins alone, soon the lower voices join in, and the music grows in excitement. This

Quartet has received a new edition. Perhaps good enough for an occasional performance in the concert hall and for home as well.

String Quartet in A flat Major, Op.72 No.3, The opening Allegro moderato is quite interesting in that it opens in what appears to be a rather slow tempo which is created by the use of notes of longer time value. However, the real tempo can be heard as passages of quicker notes appear. A lovely Adagio is the work's center of gravity, while a typical Viennese classical Menuetto follows. The finale, Moderato has an unusual beginning which is entrusted entirely to the two lower voices, the viola and the cello. The entrance of the violins with their whirling triplet passages do not really improve things very much and sadly removes what would otherwise be a certain candidate for concert from this group. But still a worthwhile work which amateurs will like. All of the Op.72 quartets have received new editions.

String Quartet in D Major, Op.92 No.1 is the first of a set dating from 1816. Krommer, who was by then nearly 60, while still writing in what could be considered the late Viennese Classical style, nevertheless, had advanced his style in several ways. His ideas remained fresh and often original and always well executed. The opening movement, Allegro vivace, begins in canonic fashion. Rather than developing it, Krommer introduces new idea after new idea. A gentle Andante follows. Here Krommer creates a lulling sense of calm with a series of repeating 8th notes. The Menuetto, allegretto which comes next is more a Beethovenian scherzo than a minuet. The finale, Moderato, begins in stately fashion with a downward series of notes providing the main theme from which Krommer builds several exciting episodes. Worthy of concert performance and good for home.

String Quartet in G Major, Op.92 No.3 like the quartets of Hummel was the harbinger of the emerging early Romantic movement. The opening movement, Allegro con scherzo, is rather unusual not only because Krommer chose to call it a scherzo but also because of the constant drum beat rhythm of the main theme which gives the music a military flavor. The second movement is a lovely Adagio. The clever Menuetto, allegretto which comes next is dominated by its teasing rhythm and here the trio rather resembles the main section. The flowing finale, Allegro, is full of energy and forward drive. Recommended for amateurs.

String Quartet in a minor, Op.103 No.3 in a minor is the third of a set dating from 1821. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, gives ample evidence that Krommer's style was showing signs of the early Romantic. After unison opening chords, which create a kind of short fanfare, the music immediately become threatening and turbulent. This mood continues throughout. Here and there, we hear touches of the older classical style and even a short passages which sounds like a quote from Mozart's Dissonant Quartet, K.465. The second movement, Andante con scherzo, is in several ways quite interesting and original. The main theme is a kind of restless but subdued traveling music. The con scherzo explodes like a brief cloud burst onto the scene late into the movement. The thrusting and energetic Menuetto, allegretto which follows, is a cross between a scherzo and a minuet, but certainly not anything that could be danced to. The finale, Allegretto, literally explodes with a kind of Mannheim Rocket. No sooner then this is over, comes a short, teasing quote from Mozart's Magic Flute, which also quickly evaporates. Krommer then repeats the whole series, before presenting a rollicking ride over a delightful music countryside. A good choice for the concert hall and for amateurs.



Halina Krzyzanowska (1867-1937) was born in Paris to Polish parents. Her father went into exile, having taken part in an uprising against the Russian occupiers. She was trained as a pianist at the Paris Conservatory where she won prizes both for her playing and compositions. For many years, she enjoyed a reputation as one of the

leading concert pianists before the French public and her compositions were published by some of the leading publishing houses of Paris. She eventually became a professor of music at the Conservatory in Rennes where she lived the rest of her life.

Her String Quartet in A Major dates from 1920. It was dedicated to William Cantrelle, the first violinist of the quartet that premiered the work. The opening movement, Allegro commodo, is genial and quite lyrical showing a kind of late romanticism of the sort favored by the French Impressionists. The middle movement, Andante, begins with a lovely, melancholy theme, which almost sounds like a plaint. In the bright, upbeat finale, Allegro vivace, the mood lightens. Here and there tinges of Debussy can be heard. This is an appealing and attractive work with fine part writing by one of the few woman composers of the French Impressionist school. It deserves concert performance and can be recommended to amateurs as well.



Joseph Küffner (1776-1856) was born in the Bavarian city of Wurzburg where his father was the court music director. Küffner studied violin and served as a member of the Ducal Orchestra as well as a soloist. Besides the violin, he was proficient on the harpsichord, piano, organ, clarinet, basset horn and guitar. He later was appointed Military Music Director of Bavaria. His works for military band were so

well thought of that for several decades the Armies of the Bavaria marched to his music. He wrote over 300 works in all genres, of which the bulk were for chamber ensembles and which were extraordinarily popular during his lifetime. Today, he is exclusively remembered for his compositions for the guitar and for wind instruments. Although primarily a violinist, like Paganini, Küffner reached a very high level of proficiency on the guitar because he not only included it in his chamber music compositions, but also wrote etudes for it. Yet, during his lifetime, his compositions for strings, in particular his string quartets, were very popular as evidenced by the commission he received from as far away as New York. Küffner's chamber music was regularly performed in concert throughout Europe during his lifetime and was among the favorites of amateurs as well. He wrote at least 8 string quartets.

The **String Quartet in C Major, Op.41 No.1** is his first and the first of a set of three composed in 1815. They were dedicated to the German composer and violin virtuoso Ferdinand Franzl and the outer movements, Allegro moderato and Polonaise, give the first violin a chance to shine. The opening movement is full of charming melody and is followed by a singing and lyrical Andante. The third movement, Menuetto, allegretto is a energetic south German dance full of forward drive and a fetching Ländler trio section. The work is topped off by a buoyant Polonaise. Very tuneful, a good work to play and hear.

String Quartet in G Major, Op.41 No.2 The themes to the opening Allegro are based on triplet passages primarily found in the first violin. The cello is used to answer in similar fashion over pulsing accompaniment in the middle voices. The second movement Andante sostenuto, though not so marked is a kind of Sicilienne. In the minor section pizzicato in the cello plays an important role. The third movement, Menuetto, allegretto features a lively resposion between the first violin and cello with a contrasting, flowing trio section. The work concludes with an appealing Mozartean Rondo.

In **String Quartet in A Major, Op.41 No.3**, as in the first quartet of this set, the outer movements, Allegro and Presto, give the first violin a chance to shine, however, the cello is also treated generously. The opening movement begins with a syncopated accompaniment by the inner voices while the cello and then the first violin present the bright vibrant theme, which is full of excitement. Next comes a lovely Andante con moto, subtitled Ro-

mance. The third movement, Menuetto, is full of forward motion with charming melody and is followed by a singing and lyrical Andante. The thrusting third movement, Menuetto, allegretto exudes energy, and is contrasted by a charming and delicate trio section. The finale is a toe tapping Presto. All three of these can be recommended to amateurs as long as they have a good first violin. Nos.1 and 3 could be brought into the concert hall.

String Quartet in F Major, Op.48 No.1 is the first of a set of three composed in 1816 for the St. Caecilia Musical Society of New York. This in itself is a good indication of how far Kuffner's reputation had spread. The quartet opens with a captivating Allegro and is followed by an Andante poco Adagio which is a folk theme and set of excellent, contrasting variations. The third movement, Menuetto, allegro assai is your typical south German minuet with a slower more lyrical trio. The finale, Moderato, is fresh and original sounding. Full of lovely melodies.

String Quartet in G Major, Op.48 No.2 begins with a Moderato full of lovely melodies. Next comes a delicate Andante con moto, which suddenly morphs into a jaunty march-like melody. The third movement is a typical late classical Minuetto full of syncopation and a responson between the first violin and cello. The quartet is topped off by a real toe-tapping Rondo.

String Quartet in D Major, Op.48 No.3 begins with a tuneful Allegro with a persistent drum beat rhythm. Next comes an Andante, which though not so marked, a theme and set of variations. The theme is a somber folk melody and the succeeding variations, each instrument is given a chance to shine. The third movement, Minuetto, allegro is unusual for its unisono accents. A slower trio section consisting of a charming Ländler provides a fine contrast. The finale, Rondo Russe, is full of forward motion and again offers each instrument to take the lead. Although not composed with a violin soloist in mind, these quartet also require a first violinist of good technical standard. Certainly amateurs will enjoy these works because of their appealing melodies and occasional concert performance would not be amiss.

String Quartet in C Major, Op.178, I found rather disappointing as far as appealing melodies by comparison to his earlier efforts. I would give this a miss.

It should also be mentioned that Kuffner was a first class arranger and his many arrangements of famous operas for string quartet such as Don Giovanni, William Tell, Die Freischutz and several others were extraordinarily popular when such arrangements were in vogue. They are very well done and fun to play.



Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832), often called the "Beethoven of the Flute", is well-known to flute players, if few others, for the many fine pieces that he composed for that instrument. Though it is generally assumed, by those who have heard of him, that he was a flute virtuoso, ironically, he never played the instrument. Born in Germany, after being blinded in one eye in a freak street accident, he studied piano in Hamburg. In 1810, he fled to Copenhagen to avoid conscription in the Napoleonic Army, which overwhelmed the many small principalities and duchies of northern Germany, and in 1813 he became a Danish citizen. Outside of several lengthy trips which he took, he resided there until his death. During his lifetime, he was known primarily as a concert pianist and composer of Danish opera, but was responsible for introducing many of Beethoven's works, which he greatly admired, to Copenhagen audiences. Considering that his house burned down destroying all of his unpublished manuscripts, he was a prolific composer leaving more than 200 published works in most genres. Beethoven, whom Kuhlau knew personally, exerted the greatest influence upon his music. Certainly with regard to form, Kuhlau was clearly able to make sense and use what Beethoven was doing in something as advanced as his Middle

Period. Thus, for those encountering his chamber music for the first time, there is always a surprise at how fine the music is structurally and also how well he handles the instruments. Beyond this, he definitely had, like Mozart and Schubert, a gift for wonderful melodies which bubble forth effortlessly.

The **Grand Quartet in a minor, Op.122**, composed in 1832 shortly before Kuhlau's death, was to be the first of a set of six. It combines classical quartet style with the drama of Weber and to some extent Rossini. A pensive Andante sostenuto introduction begins the work, before the main theme of the Allegro assai poco agitato dramatically explodes forth. The rhythmically intricate and highly ornamented big second movement, Adagio con espressione is by turns lyrical and emotionally charged. Next comes a Scherzo, allegro assai. The robust and thrusting main theme rushes forward from start to finish. The trio, a lovely serenade for the first violin, is equally as fast. The Finale, Allegro molto, begins with a soft, smooth introduction. Suddenly a powerful and exciting theme bursts forth and carries the music along to a thrilling finish. The ideas and musical language are different from others writing and this time. Recognized as an important work upon its publication, It certainly deserves concert performance and can be warmly recommended to amateurs.



Karol Kurpiński (1785-1857) was born in the Polish town of Włoszakowice. His first music lessons, which were on violin and organ, were from his father who was an organist. Recognized as an organ prodigy, he obtained a post as church organist at the age of 12. After working in Lvov and environs, he moved to Warsaw where he studied with Josef Elsner, after which he obtained a position as a conductor at one of Warsaw's most important theaters. Later he served as director of the Warsaw Opera. He pursued a career as a conductor, composer and teacher.

Not surprisingly, most of his works were operas although he did compose two interesting trios--one for clarinet, violin and piano, the other for horn, bassoon and viola in addition to his **Fantasie for String Quartet** was composed in 1825. The fantasia format had been popularized by several composers from this era, such as Carl Maria von Weber, Andreas Romberg and Mozart among others. It is in four main sections. It begins with an Adagio notable for its several contrasting episodes. Next comes a fugue, then a Moderato and finally a Presto. The Fantasie not only is an appealing work in its own right, but is historically important as Kurpiński was generally regarded as one of the most important composers, if not the most important, before the advent of Chopin. He is said to have been instrumental in helping to create the Polish national style of music. This is an appealing work which is strong enough to be given a concert airing and can be recommended to amateur players.

Alexander Kuznetsov (1847-1918 also spelled Kouznetzoff, Kuznetzov) was born in the Russian capital of St Petersburg. He studied at the conservatory there as a pupil of the famous Russian virtuoso cellist Karl Davidoff. A first rate cellist himself, Kuznetsov became a member from 1871 to 1883 of the Russian Quartet, the leading ensemble at the time in Russia. A contemporary and friend of Tchaikovsky, a fellow conservatory student, Kuznetsov, at Tchaikovsky's request, took the part of first cellist in the premiere of Tchaikovsky's string sextet, Souvenir de Florence. He taught at the Alexander Lyceum, the Imperial School just outside of St Petersburg founded in 1811 by Tsar Alexander I. Most of his works were for cello, including two suites for four cellos which gained considerable popularity among cellists during his lifetime.

His **String Quartet in G Major** was composed in 1906 and published the following year. It was dedicated to the St Peters-

burg Chamber Music Society. It is in four movements. In the opening movement, Allegro moderato, the cello presents the long-lined lyrical melody, which is further developed by the violin before an even more romantic second theme is presented. The second movement subtitled Légende, but marked Agitato non troppo, is dark, sad and somewhat brooding. Next comes a Scherzo, marked Vivo but it is more in the nature of a dance. The finale, Allegro pastorale, captivates from the opening bars with its pizzicato introduction that leads to a singing melody. This is a fine work. It is a good representative of the Belaiev School and is sure to make a good impression in the concert hall. As it presents no real technical difficulties, it should also interest amateurs.



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, Lachner was awarded a position as an organist in a church in Vienna. In Vienna, he met Schubert. *“We two, Schubert and I, spent most of our time together sketching new compositions. 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. He left Vienna in 1834 and returned to Munich where he remained the rest of his life, serving as Conductor of the Royal Bavarian Orchestra from 1834 to 1868. He also held the position of Professor of Composition at the Royal Conservatory. Lachner’s string quartets were much admired and often performed. Mendelssohn was fascinated by them and Schumann called Lachner the most talented composer in southern Germany. Writing twenty years later, Tchaikovsky noted that Lachner had to be placed near the pinnacle of fine composers.

String Quartet No.1 in b minor, Op.75 dates from the late 1830’s and was published in 1843. The first movement, Allegro moderato, is, like many of Haydn’s movements, monothematic. Without a contrasting second theme, Lachner instead creates an expressive and somewhat sad lyrical mood from the same melody and cleverly uses counterpoint. The second movement, Adagio quasi andante, begins with an ethereal, otherworldly introduction, which is in part created because there is no bass. The lovely main theme has a very vocal quality which becomes especially apparent in an answering duet between the viola and first violin. When Lachner takes the theme into the major, a Schubertian aura is created. The fleet and driving Scherzo which follows is of a sort one encounters in Mendelssohn. The contrasting trio section is a stately country dance. The main theme of the finale, Allegro agitato, has an urgent and pleading quality. This early-mid Romantic quartet is sure to appeal to amateur and professional alike and would certainly not be out of place in the concert hall where a fresh work from this era is required.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.76 dates from 1844. The opening Allegro reveals how Lachner, like his friend Schubert, was clearly a child of the Viennese classical school. The writing is straight-forward and melodious. There is a certain Schubertian naïveté to the music. The calm Andante quasi Adagio, though exhibiting no great depth of feeling, is nonetheless very beautiful. The chromatic and exciting Scherzo, Allegro assai is a kind of moto perpetuo. A marvelous, singing solo graces the trio section. This is a superb movement. The main theme of the finale, an Allegro in 2/4, exhibits a rolling motion of the sort Schubert employed in his last quartet, D.887. A more lyrical subject serves as the second theme. A solid work.

String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major, Op.77 also dates from 1844 and as the opus number suggests was composed immediately after the Op.76. The opening movement is a big Allegretto,

perhaps too big given the thematic material to be found therein. If it were cut in half, it would have been much more effective. The second movement, Minuetto allegretto, is a genial, almost too relaxed, it is salon sweet. The trio wanders about and does not really make much of an impression. This is followed by a languid Andante, which would be suitable for putting one to sleep. The finale, Allegro vivace, is opens in exciting fashion with a fetching melody in the first violin over a pulsing accompaniment. But once again, given the thematic material, the whole thing goes on far too long. No need to look here.

String Quartet No.4 in d minor, Op.120 begins with a longish Adagio introduction which creates a sense of expectation in the listener who is not disappointed by the turbulent, emotional main theme of the Allegro non troppo. We have left the realm of the classical period are squarely in romantic territory now. The Andante quasi Adagio with its very lengthy songlike first theme has a nostalgic air. There is a marvelous stormy middle section. Lachner’s scherzos are invariably first rate. This Scherzo, Allegro vivace is no exception. It could serve as a mid-romantic prototype for a scherzo, very fine indeed. The finale, Allegro agitato, immediately begins with a syncopated theme that creates the requisite state of agitation. An appealing and lyrical second theme is the icing on the cake to the fine work.

String Quartet No.5 in G Major, Op.169 dates from the mid 1840s but was not published until 1875. The opening movement, Allegretto, is pleasant but hardly a riveting affair. The pounding main theme of the Minuetto, allegro assai, holds one’s attention better. It is closer to a scherzo than a minuet. The trio section is quite good and provides a nice contrast. One does not expect excitement from a Largo, and you will not find it here. But, on the other hand, this slow and lyrical movement has the requisite emotional content and lyricism to make for a fine effort. The finale, Allegro vivace, unfortunately, had a rather trite main subject. It does get better as it goes along. Not for concert performance but still recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.6 in e minor, Op.173 appeared in 1848. is clearly classical in form the thematic material and its treatment is firmly rooted in the Romantic era. In many ways it combines certain characteristics of Middle Beethoven with the lyricism of Schubert. The opening Allegro moderato is a good example of this synthesis. It begins with a beautiful broad melody full of promise. But is punctuated by dramatic Beethovenian bursts. The slow movement, Adagio non troppo, begins softly with a feeling of reverence. A fine delicacy pervades this charming music. A finely wrought Scherzo, Allegro vivace follows. It begins softly, with excitement always bubbling just beneath the surface. A lovely trio provides the perfect interlude. The exciting, almost operatic, finale, Allegretto, immediately captures the listener’s attention. On several occasions, the music is brought to sudden halts with loud Beethovenian chords of anguish, but the music always overcomes it. A charming intermezzo-like second theme serves as a perfect foil to relieve the tension. Strong enough for concert performance and good for amateurs as well.



Ignaz Lachner (1807-1895) was the second of the three famous Lachner brothers. there were some 16 children in all. His older brother Franz was the best known, having heavily traded on his youthful friendship with Franz Schubert, certainly more than Ignaz who also knew Schubert. Ignaz was taught, as were the others, organ, piano and violin. Upon the latter instrument, he was somewhat of a prodigy, but despite this, his father insisted he become a teacher. After his father’s death, he studied violin with Bernhard Molique, a violin virtuoso and then joined his brother Franz in Vienna where he too befriended and was influenced by Schubert, not to mention Haydn, Mozart and

Beethoven. Though primarily known as a conductor, Lachner composed a considerable amount of music, much of it chamber music, including seven string quartets, two of which are for unusual combinations.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.43 appeared in 1865 was composed in the early 1830s.. It begins with a genial but overly long Allegro, which among other things, briefly quotes from the second movement to Beethoven's Op.18 No.4. The melodies are quite lovely, which to some extent palliates the movement's length. Of particular interest is his use of the cello. It often serves as an echo for the first violin and on occasion completes the second half of a phrase for it. Its prominence is unusual for Lachner who did not write so well for it again. An equally long Adagio comes next. The main theme is operatic, as is the wonderfully lyrical second theme, which the cello is allowed to introduce. The perfume of late Mozart hovers in the background. Then comes a quite good Scherzo, robust and Beethovenesque. Once again the cello is featured prominently. The finale, Presto non troppo is quite nice without being extraordinary. Not for concert, but warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.51 appeared in 1856, but also dates from decades before. The opening somewhat gentle Allegro moderato, is okay, not great, not bad. Much of it sounds like Haydn could have written it. It is followed by an Andante con moto, decent, and also sounding like Haydn could have done it. Next is a Scherzo, presto, my previous comments apply to this movement as well. The finale, Allegro vivace, sounds like it could just as easily have been penned by Haydn in 1790. Not hard to play, but certainly not very original. Okay for amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in C Major appeared in 1858. begins with an Allegro moderato which does not sound like Haydn but is closer to early Beethoven, though it does not sound much like him. A decent movement. Next comes a lengthy Andantino which is basically a Sicilienne. Not at all bad. Then comes a Schubertian Scherzo, presto. This is a really good, exciting movement, first rate, with a musette trio section. The finale, Allegretto quasi andantino. Not exactly what you might think should be a finale as it is not exactly bursting with excitement. But it certainly is lovely, until Lachner attempts to develop with a series of whirling triplets which recalls Beethoven's Op.18 quartets. Definitely good for amateurs but not really for concert.

Despite the fact that **String Quartet No.4 in G Major, Op.74** appeared in 1875 well into the Romantic period, it is music which still is very close to Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert in spirit. The air of the Vienna Classical period permeates the work, but is filtered through and does show the evidence of the developments of early Romanticism. An example of this is the second theme given to the viola in the opening movement, Allegro moderato, which, full of Italian bel canto melody, reminds one of Schubert and Vienna. The second movement, Andante, with its beautiful melodies, could well serve as a Nocturne for a summer evening's entertainment in the park. The exciting Scherzo, which follows, provides a stunning contrast. The energetic finale, Allegro, is full of rhythmic treats. This quartet, as well as all of Lachner's chamber music, could best be summed up by what he said at age 87, the year before he died, *"To the very end I have been true to the classic composers of Vienna I admired so much."* One must really keep this in mind when evaluating Lachner's quartets. He was not trying to write music that was more modern sounding than the Vienna classics although his superb gift for melody lifts many of these works well beyond the realm of mere imitation. The part writing is good for all of the instruments and fun to play. Warmly recommended for amateurs.

Lachner wrote on the manuscript of his **String Quartet No.5 in G Major, Op.105** "To the memory of Joseph Haydn." The opening Allegro ma non troppo certainly starts off sounding as if Haydn had written it. But as it develops it no longer does. The main theme is a lovely, cheerful, somewhat stately folk dance

melody. Lachner rather than introducing other themes spends the movement elaborating on its possibilities. The Andante grave which follows is dominated by a simple naive but charming folk melody. It is lovely but not grave and of the kind Schubert wrote. In the scherzo, Allegro vivace, which follows, Lachner quotes the folk melody Lustiges Zusammensein Landleute--the happy gathering of the country folk, which Beethoven used in the scherzo of his Pastoral Symphony. It is meant as tribute to the last of the great classicist composers from his Viennese period. But he immediately punctures the balloon with humor by suddenly inserting a snippet from the Viennese drinking song, Du Lieber Augustine, about a drunk who during a outbreak of the plague fell into a pit with corpses and then later woke up greatly surprised by his companions. The bright and light-hearted finale, Allegro vivace, begins in Haydnesque fashion. Quite striking is the double-stopping used to create the sound of bagpipes. Suddenly, in the middle of proceedings, a sad, slower andante is inserted. But not for long as the clouds quickly clear with the return of the main theme. Perhaps good enough as a replacement for a Haydn or Mozart in the concert hall and certainly good for amateurs.

String Quartet No.6 in a minor, Op.105, presumably written some years later. The opening Allegro assai, at least harmonically, shows the influence of Schubert. The following Andante and Scherzo are more or less ordinary but, like the first movement, by no means to be despised. The finale, Allegro assai, is a cut above the other movements on the strength of the melodies. This quartet, though at times quite good, on the whole is just average.

String Quartet No.7 in B flat Major, Op. Post. Was composed the year before he died at the age of 87 but not published until 1896, the year after he died, and hence numbered Op. Post. The opening movement Allegro moderato begins quietly with a melody which brings Mozart's Clarinet Quintet to mind. The lyrical second theme is punctuated by dramatic episodes. The second movement is a charming Haydnesque Menuetto. In the trio section, the viola is given a chance to shine with a fetching ländler. Next comes a Romanze. It is an engaging intermezzo. Mendelssohn could not have written it any better. The middle section has a march-like quality. The finale, Allegro, is a very classical 6/8 rondo. Although it was written in 1894, toward the turn of the 20th century, as noted, Lachner was no late-romantic and he had no desire to be one. He continually maintained that his goal was to write with the clarity and transparency typified by Mozart and Haydn, combined with the lilting beauty of Schubert. To hear his works, it is clear that in this he succeeded. His place in music is as a "Classicist-Romantic". His quartets achieved considerable popularity in their time by virtue of their fetching melodies, effective harmonies and the ease with which they could be performed, especially by amateur players.



Vinzenz Lachner (1811-1893) was the younger brother of Franz and Ignaz. He received training from his father and subsequently studied in Augsburg and Vienna. He was primarily known during his lifetime as a gifted conductor, teacher and arranger. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major, Op.27 dates from 1856. I am not familiar with the work, but contemporary critics praised it for being well-written, good to play, fresh, lively and original were terms used to describe it.

String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.36 appeared in 1864. The lively opening movement, Allegro, has appealing subjects. The lovely Andante which comes next has a religious feel to it and a nicely contrasting middle section. In third place is an energetic, thrusting Minuet with a pretty trio. The finale, Allegro, is a kind of Mendelssohnian elves dance. This quartet can be recommended to amateurs and an occasional concert performance.

In addition, he also wrote a rather unusual set of forty two **Variations on a C Major Scale for String Quartet, Op.42**, dating from 1867. It is not known why he undertook this work dedicated to Betty Schott, the wife of his publisher Franz Schott, owner of the famous publishing house B. Schott and Sons. These are original, finely contrasting, and full of charm. Along with the variations of Josef Rheinberger, Zdenek Fibich and Donald Tovey, these variations must be rated among the very best and not to be missed amateur quartet players.



Édouard Lalo (1823-1892) today, outside of France, is best known for his *Symphonie Espagnole* for violin and orchestra and perhaps his cello concerto. Within France, he is remembered for his opera *Le roi d'Ys*. Hardly anyone knows or has heard his excellent chamber music, which includes three very appealing piano trios and a string quartet. Lalo was born in Lille and studied at the local conservatory there before entering the Paris Conservatory, where he studied with the well-known French violinist and conductor, François Habeneck. Before he made a name for himself as a composer, for nearly two decades, Lalo made his living working as a violinist, and in particular, performing chamber music. If one considers this, it is perhaps not so surprising that he was able to write such attractive and finished chamber works. The name Lalo is of Spanish origin, and although Lalo's family had settled in the north of France some 300 years before he was born, he was fascinated by Spain and this can be heard in several of his works, including this one.

The String Quartet in E flat Major, Op.19/45 was originally published in 1855 as Op.19. Lalo became dissatisfied with it and revised the quartet in 1884 as his Op.45. As one might expect of a professional quartet player of one of France's leading string quartets which specialized in the Vienna classics, the quartet style is beyond reproach. The rhythm of the theme found in the opening *Allegro non troppo* is quite unusual and make an impression. The following *Adagio non troppo* is a lovely *Song Without Words*. The main theme to the *Scherzo, Allegro con fuoco*, is clearly of Spanish origin. The trio section reminds one somewhat of that from Beethoven's Op.18 No.6. The finale has an appealing march like theme. Good for concert and home.



Samuel de Lange, Jr. (1840-1911) was born in Rotterdam. His father was also a musician and founder of a piano maker. Junior studied organ and piano with a Liszt student and then with Johannes Verhulst, a then leading composer in the Netherlands. He had a multifaceted career as a teacher, conservatory director, touring pianist and prolific composer of some 800 works, among which are reputedly 13 string quartets.

He knew and was on friendly terms with most of the major composers of his time, including Bruch, Brahms and Reger. His early works were influenced by Beethoven and Schumann while his later compositions showed some likeness to Brahms and Reger.

String Quartet No.1 in a minor, Op.15 was published in 1873. It is well-written and sounds good but rhythmically not without difficulties which must be overcome to make it sound that way. *Adagio, agitato*, features two arresting recitatives. The middle movement is a pious *Adagio* with a stormy middle section. The finale, a lively and spirited *Allegro* brings the work to a close. Not for concert but okay for home. I am not familiar with No.2 in C Major, Op.18 or No.3 in G Major Op.67.

String Quartet No.4 in D Major, Op.81. I have only heard it. A very eclectic work. It is a hodge-podge of Brahms, Schumann, and Reger. Interesting but difficult to describe. Maybe for concert, but amateurs are unlikely to make much of it.



Rued Langgaard (1893-1952) was born in Copenhagen. Both of his parents were pianists and he initially studied with them before studying with C.F.P. Horneman. He composed throughout most of his life. He was largely ignored as a composer until after his death. He composed 16 symphonies and perhaps as many as ten works for string quartets. Perhaps,

because the exact number is in some doubt as he recycled and cannibalized several movements from earlier quartets and placed them into ones. Most of his quartets date from his early period, the late 1910s and early 1920s, before he turned bitter and was forced to endure the neglect of the Danish musical establishment. They feature a reckless variety of material and encompass a vast expressive range. It is in some ways fair to say that he did not write pure music, that is, his music always seems to be about something. For example, the titles of the *Second Quartet's* four movements are: *Storm Clouds Receding*; *Train Passing By*; *Landscape in Twilight*; and *The Walk*. The *Third Quartet* has three movements variously headed *Rapacious*; *Artful* and *Scoffing*. Sometime the music seems to simply falls apart into a series of disconnected episodes, but it is consistently entertaining, expressive, and curiously moving. An admission here. I have not played any of these works. However, I have recordings of them and have heard a few in live concert. The sheet music, until recently, has been very difficult to come by. Several works remained unpublished until the 21st century. As his reputation and greater appreciation of his music continues to grow, I believe it is important to give some account here of what I think will be of interest to players in the future when the music will, hopefully be more readily available.

String Quartet No.1 was completed in 1915 revised in 1936.

String Quartet No.2 was completed in 1918. The movements describe commonplace occurrences as evidenced by the subtitles of the four movements: *Storm Clouds Receding*, *Train Passing By*, *Landscape in Twilight*, and *The Walk*. The moods are for the most part bucolic and pastoral rather than epic at the root of this music, although the second movement depicting a *Train Passing By* is rather harsh, jolting with its vivid attempt to convey the machine sound of the engine and clatter on the tracks. All of the voices have an important role to play.

String Quartet No. 3 was completed six years later in 1924. It is full of bold ideas and animated episodes. The first movement alone is technically very demanding on the players and rises to great emotional heights. A short and somewhat odd *Scherzo* comes next. In the finale, the thematic material is quickly passed from voice to voice, perhaps too quickly, and in any event not easy from an ensemble standpoint. Interrupted the energetic lively passages are highly contrasting, austere hymn-like episodes. Not a quartet for beginners for sure. *String Quartet No.4*, subtitled *Summer Days* was completed in 1918 and revised in 1931.

String Quartet No. 6 was completed in 1919 and is in one movement. Uses a Danish folk tune but in a very modern setting.



Joseph Lauber (1864-1952) was born in the Swiss town of Ruswil. He studied organ and composition with Joseph Rheinberger at the Munich Conservatory and also with Louis Diemer and Jules Massenet at the Paris Conservatory. He pursued a career as an organist, teacher and composer, eventually serving as a professor at the Zurich and Geneva conservatories. He was a co-founder of the Swiss Association of Composers. While most of his works were for organ, he did not ignore chamber music, composing a piano trio, piano quartet, piano quintet, a string quintet, several sonatas. Perhaps the best known is his *Quartet for Four basses* composed for members of the Berlin Philharmonic.

His **String Quartet in g minor, Op.5** dates from 1897. It begins with an Andante espressivo introduction which builds tension and leads to the main section, a muscular Allegro energico. The second movement is a quirky Allegretto scherzando followed by a slower contrasting trio section. Next comes a melancholy Adagio non troppo. The finale, Allegro vivace, begins with a question and answer sequence before morphing into a bright upbeat affair, which is constantly interrupted by restless episodes. If he had a gift for melody, it is not on display here.



Sylvio Lazzari (1857-1944) was born in Bolzen in the South Tirol, then part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire, now part of Italy known as Bolzano. Of Italian and Austrian stock, his given name was Josef Sylvester Lazzari which he changed when he arrived in Paris in 1882, after studying law in Innsbruck and Vienna. In Paris, he studied with Charles Gounod and befriended Cesar Franck and Ernest Chausson, who encouraged him to pursue a career in France. He did so and remained in Paris for the rest of his life, holding several positions. He composed in most genres. His chamber music includes a string quartet, an octet for winds and this piano trio. His music shows the influence of Franck and Wagner.

String Quartet in a minor, Op.17 appeared in 1911. The first movement, Allegro agitato, is not far from the German Romantic style. Finely put together with an abundance of spirited and appealing thematic material, its use of rhythm immediately captivates the attention. It ends with an andante coda which features an impressive melody that appears again in the second movement, Andante. Later, one hears echoes from Wagner's Tristan and Isolde. The third movement, a Scherzo, impresses through its use of rhythm rather than melody, which more use of is made in the trio section. The finale, Rondo allegro giocoso, is as the title suggests, jocular and full of good spirits. There is much here which is quite charming, including a kind of capriccioso section. A good choice for concert and likely to make a strong impression upon its audiences. Only for the best of amateurs.



Charles Lefebvre (1843-1917) was born in Paris. After initially studying law, he entered the Paris Conservatory where he studied with Ambrose Thomas and Charles Gounod. While there, he won the prestigious Prix de Rome, the stipendium to which allowed him to live in Italy for several years. He composed in virtually every genre and chamber music comprises a sizeable portion of his output and was held in high regard as witnessed by the fact that the

Academie des Beaux Arts awarded him their Prix Chartier for chamber music excellence on two occasions in 1884 and 1895. He served for several years as Professor of Ensemble Performance at the Conservatory.

His **String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.80** dates from 1891. It is in three substantial movements, Allegro moderato, Intermezzo scherzando, allegro, Un peu retenez and Allegro agitato appassionato. It enjoyed considerable popularity, was partially responsible for his winning the 1895 Chartier Prize and was made into several arrangements. The opening Allegro begins with a slow introduction with a short violin cadenza leading to the turbulent main section filled with many tempo changes and moods. The middle movement is a lively scherzo. An energetic and thrusting Allegro agitato concludes the work.

String Quartet No.2 in e minor, Op.124 dates from 1910. More or less a contemporary of Saint Saëns and a generation older than the Impressionists, his music like that of Saint Saëns, was not influenced by them. The opening movement begins with a poignant Andante introduction leading to an energetic, rhythmi-

cally powerful Allegro risoluto. The second subject is smoother and more lyrical. The second movement, Andante sostenuto, is essentially a lovely, vocal serenade sung by the first violin over a pulsing accompaniment in the other voices. The Vivace, which comes next with its whirling 16th note accompaniment and forward drive, though not so marked, is for all practical purposes a scherzo. The slow, singing trio section provides an excellent contrast. The bright finale, Allegro con brio, as the same spirit as the opening Allegro risoluto from the opening movement. Both of these quartets are an excellent exemplars of the late French Romantic era which eschews, as does the music of his contemporary Saint Saëns, the influence of the Impressionists. They deserve concert performance but are also a good choice for amateur groups as they are not at all difficult to play.



Even though he was quite well-known during his lifetime, information about **Maximilian von Leidesdorf** (1787-1840) is not exactly easy to come by. His son, also Maximilian, became a famous psychiatrist and at least in English today is better known than his father. Our Maximilian was born in Vienna and studied with Salieri and Albrechtsberger two of the most prominent teachers then in Vienna.

Leidesdorf was active in Vienna until 1827 when he left for Florence where he remained until his death. In both cities, he enjoyed a career as a respected composer, important concert pianist and sought after teacher. As a pianist, he is widely regarded as a forerunner to Czerny. His compositions were popular during his lifetime and circulated throughout Europe. He was friendly with Schubert and his publishing firm, Sauer & Leidesdorf (later acquired by Diabelli) besides publishing many works by Haydn and Beethoven, was responsible for bringing out several of Schubert's works when no one else would.

It is not exactly known when Leidesdorf's **String Quartet in g minor, Op.144** was composed. Judging from the opus number, it was a late work. It was eventually published shortly after his death by his own firm. On the title page, the quartet was listed as his Premiere Quartet, but it appears to be the only quartet he. The Quartet is a very original sounding work, combining elements from the late classical and early romantic periods. The opening Allegro is full of turbulence and energy characterized more by its pounding rhythm created by the repetition of four 16th notes. The second movement, marked Menuetto is the kind of minuet Haydn might have written had he been alive in 1830. In the trio section, again the repeated use of four 16th notes creates a strong contrast with the more lyrical main theme. The Largo, which comes third, is noble and stately, but again, the rhythm plays an important role. The finale, Allegro agitato, is as the movement marking suggests agitated and restless, as a result of its rhythms. Leidesdorf wrote some very charming chamber music, but despite its originality, this is not among them.



Guillaume Lekeu (1870-94) was born in the village of Heusy in Belgium and began his musical studies at a conservatory nearby. In 1888, his family moved to Paris and he entered the Paris Conservatory where first he studied with César Franck and after Franck's death, with Vincent d'Indy. Tragically, Lekeu died of typhoid fever just after his 24th birthday. The usually critical Debussy regarded Lekeu to be as talented as Franck and d'Indy regarded him a genius.

His **String Quartet in G Major** is one of only two works which he completed in its entirety. It dates from 1888 and is in six movements. This in itself has led several scholars to suggest that he was influenced by Beethoven's Op.130 String Quartet

which served as his model. Beethoven may have served as a structural model but there is nothing in the music which sounds even vaguely like him. French impressionism plays a influence. The opening Allegretto quasi allegro is genial but the thematic material wanders. Next is a big Adagio sostenuto, calm and reflective. Then a very brief sparkling Capriccio in which the cello plays a long solo over the tinkling accompaniment in the other voices, reminiscent of what Verdi does with the cello in the third movement of his quartet. It is quite striking. Next up a Romance and once again, the cello is given the lead., another short movement, a playful Poco allegro e molto scherzoso is closer to an intermezzo than a scherzo. The last movement, Allegro assai, the shortest of all, once again begins with the cello a proceeds in quasi fugal style. The is a good quartet, certainly a candidate for concert and for good amateur players.

He also wrote two other short works for quartet: **Meditation** and **Molto adagio sempre cantanto e doloroso** both of which date from 1887. From his correspondence it appears that these were warm ups for the eventual quartet. The Meditation is fairly substantial, lyrical, mostly quiet and akin to an elegy. From the opening bars of the Molto Adagio, one immediately recognizes as a gorgeous dirge, truly appropriate for performance at a funeral.



M.P. Belaiev

Les Vendredis—Fridays at the mansion of lumber millionaire, amateur violist and chamber music enthusiast Mitrofan Belaiev. Those Fridays became legendary. They began simply as a group of amateurs with a passion for playing string quartets who gathered at Belaiev's. But soon these evenings were to become the social center of musical life in St. Petersburg for Belaiev was no ordinary enthusiast. As Belaiev approached 50, he decided to devote all of his time and energy and much of his money to the cause of Russian music. In 1885, he founded the publishing firm bearing his name not only in Petersburg but also in Leipzig then the music-publishing capital of Europe to insure that the works of the up and coming Russian composers he published would be given the widest exposure. Soon the amateurs of Belaiev's quartet were receiving visits from the likes of Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Liadov, Glazunov and many others. And before long these erstwhile visitors became regulars. They were to be known as the 'Belaiev Circle.' Over the next 20 years, on many an occasion, each of these composers, most of them at one time or another students of Korsakov, would bring with them a piece composed for string quartet as an offering of appreciation for all of the support and hospitality Belaiev had given and continued to give them. Les Vendredis---16 works for string quartet---was published in 2 sets after Belaiev's death in 1903. These works are perhaps the best and most lasting tribute to that lost world of Fridays. They were selected by Rimsky-Korsakov along with Glazunov and Liadov from among dozens of pieces which



Korsakov, Glazunov and Liadov

were found with Belaiev's papers. Some were written on the fly, right there on a Friday evening in Belaiev's study, while he and his quartet were performing out front. Others were composed ahead of time and presented for a special occasions such as a birthday. The composers whose contributions can be found in the Les Vendredis are Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov, Borodin, Liadov, Kopylov, Blumenfeld, Sokolov, Artcibushev, and d;Osten Saksen. This wonderful collection of works is sure to please. The shorter works can be used as encores, the longer works, such

as those by Korsakov, Borodin and Artcibushev can be programmed in concert where a full length quartet is not desired.



Franciszek Lessel (1780-1838), along with Jozef Elsner and Ignacy Dobrzynski, was one of Poland's leading representatives of the late classical style. Lessel, the son of a Czech musician living in Warsaw, was sent to Vienna to study medicine. It is doubtful that Haydn, with whom he studied between 1799-1808, taught him anything about that subject. After returning to Poland, Lessel supported himself as a concert pianist and composer.

He is said to have written at least 11 string quartets of which the **String Quartet No.8 in B flat Major, Op.19**, is the only one known to have survived. Dating from 1824, in four movements, it is written in concertante style. It comes pretty close to being a quatuor brillant, i.e. a work for solo violin with accompaniment. The music is charming and to some extent, form aside, perhaps justifies the claim that Lessel was one of Haydn's leading students. Very appealing melodies for which he obviously, judging from this quartet, had a gift, but there is nothing extraordinary here. I would not bring it into the concert hall. Amateurs with a fine violinist will perhaps enjoy it.



Johann Georg Lickl (1769-1843) was born in the Austrian town of Korneuburg. During the 1780s he studied with Albrechtsberger and Haydn in Vienna. He wrote three string quartets, his Op.1 supposedly in the 1790s but judging from their style, he was hardly au courant. The works are decent but relatively unremarkable of the sort Haydn was writing in the 1760s. Like most works from this period,

including those of both Haydn and Mozart, the first violin has virtually all of the thematic material, which while not bad, does not rise above ordinary. Perhaps for amateurs



György Ligeti (1923-2006) was born in the Hungarian portion of Romanian Transylvania. He lived in Communist Hungary until 1956 after which he emigrated to Austria. He wrote four quartets and is only mentioned here because it is his String Quartet No.1 dating from 1954 which might interest some readers. It is sometimes called Bartok's Seventh String Quartet because Bartok's quartets clearly influenced the work. Ligeti, while not disowning

the work, stated it came from his Prehistoric period before he was free to write as an avant garde and experimental composer.



Adolf Lindblad (1801-1878) was born in the Swedish town of Skänninge. He took piano and flute lessons from local teachers before entering Uppsala University where he studied composition and harmony. He then went to Berlin continuing his studies with the well known composition teacher Carl Zelter. A fellow student was Felix Mendelssohn and the two struck up a friendship which lasted

throughout Mendelssohn's life. Upon his return to Sweden, Lindblad devoted himself to composition and teaching, opening a music school which he ran for most of his life. He became well-known as a music teacher and eventually secured a position as teacher to the King's children. The income from this allowed him time to compose. His specialty was the art song or lieder of which he composed over 200, earning him the title of "the Swedish Schubert." But he did not ignore other genres including

chamber music and penned string quartets, string quintets, several instrumental sonatas and a piano trio. Lindblad's music shows the influence of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, and as a result sounds like that of the late Classical and early Romantic eras. Most sources suggest he wrote 7 string quartets, a few state there were 10. Some of these quartets may have been originally published by the Swedish firm of Abraham Hirsch sometime in the late 1840's, but this is not at all certain as copies do not seem to have surfaced. In was only in 1911, some 33 years after Lindblad's death, that the Leipzig firm of C.G. Röder published all seven of his quartets but it is not clear which quartets came when. I have played two of these.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major opens with a full-blooded Allegro with beautiful, long-lined themes and is an example of his gift for writing appealing melodies. The second movement, Larghetto, starts in simple fashion but drama is built as it goes along. Next comes a somewhat dark-hued Menuetto, The finale, Allegretto vivace, begins with the viola presenting an clever ditty over the cello pizzicato but as the movement is developed, it morphs into a triumphant march.

The opening movement, Allegro ma non troppo to **String Quartet No.4 in b minor** shows the imprint of his composition teacher Carl Zelter and in some respects resembles some of Mendelssohn's early quartets. The second movement, Allegretto grazioso, is full of forward motion but also very song like. Next comes a Menuetto, allegro. The finale, Allegro molto, begins with an agitated theme before becoming more lyrical. Both of these quartets are decent works, which can be recommended to amateurs and perhaps in concert for historical purposes showing early-mid 19th century development of Swedish chamber music.



Charles Martin Loeffler (1861-1935), though he himself claimed to have been born in the French city of Mulhouse in the province of Alsace, was actually born in Berlin (his original name was Martin Karl Loeffler) into a Prussian family. Furthermore, although, much of his music shows the influence of French impressionism, of which he was much enamored, his training was entirely German. In Berlin, he studied violin with Joseph Joachim and composition with Friedrich Kiel and Woldemar Bargiel at the Berliner Hochschule für Musik. He emigrated to the U.S. in 1882 and served for many years as assistant concertmaster of the Boston Symphony. By the time of his death, he was considered one of America's most important composers.

His **String Quartet in a minor**, dates from 1889. It is one of Loeffler's earliest works. Here we find no influence of French impressionism, but rather Central European romanticism. Echoes of Schumann can be heard along with a rich Brahmsian tonal texture in the opening Allegro moderato. This is followed by a canonic Tempo de Minuetto and then an Andante assai, a theme and variations based on a German folksong. An energetic finale, Rondo pastorale: Allegro rounds out this solid quartet, which can be recommended to amateurs.

His **Music for Four Stringed Instruments** dates from 1917. It was clearly meant for string quartet since it was premiered by the famous Flonzaley Quartet and one is left wondering he did not call it a quartet. It was a memorial to the son of a close friend killed in the First World War. Its themes are from the Mass for Easter and can be heard throughout the work. The first movement, Poco adagio, is punctuated by many stormy episodes and is rarely slow enough to be considered even a little adagio. With tinges of French impressionism, the mood is mostly robust late 19th century New England. The second movement, entitled Le Saint Jour de Pâques (Easter Sunday) was originally a tone poem about the French countryside. The music evokes tonal landscapes but also the mysticism of the church service. The big finale,

Moderato, begins in a jaunty fashion. One hears martial melodies evocative of soldiers marching along but then a somber curtain of tone falls. Though not tragic, it is fitting for a memorial. The cello is given a rather large part in bringing forth the melodies in this very fine work which deserves concert performance.



Carl Loewe (generally Löwe in German, 1796 -1869) was primarily known as a song writer. During his lifetime, and for some time thereafter, his reputation was such that he was called "The Schubert of North Germany." Songwriters are usually melodists and thus I expected that Loewe's string quartets, at the very least, would feature some very pleasing melodies, but surprisingly, this was not the case. Loewe, who wrote four string quartets.

The first three quartets, **Op.24 Nos.1-3** date from 1821. No need to describe them in detail what I have to say applies to all three. Sadly the material is very threadbare, but, it must be admitted, not entirely without interest. What interest there is comes from a few unusual and original rhythmic effects rather than from any melodic or thematic excellence. Most of the movements are larded with endless repetitions of the same phrase before the music moves ahead to the next phrase, which is then repeated in the same fashion. It is almost as if Loewe had been locked up in a detention room after school and told he must write an essay of so many words. Being without much to say, he repeats and repeats the few things he has come up with. Sorry if this sounds harsh.

String Quartet No.4 in c minor, Op.26 in subtitled Quatuor Spirituel dates from 1832. Its name derives from the fact that it quotes settings of the Psalms from the Bible. It is marginally better than the earlier quartets. Here, he dispenses with the peculiar rhythmic figures which had created the only interest in those works. He resorts to fugues and canonical episodes. Maybe, just maybe, amateurs might find it interesting.



Maddalena Lombardini (1745-1785) she is often listed reference sources as Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen. She was born in Venice and at the age of 8 received a scholarship to study at the Ospedale of the Mendicanti one of five such institutions in Venice which had musical training. Vivaldi was maestro di violine at Pio Ospedale della

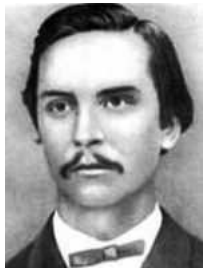
Pieta. She excelled on the violin, keyboard, voice and composition. She was considered so promising that she was sent to Padua in 1760 to study with renowned violinist and composer Giuseppe Tartini after which she pursued a career as a touring soloist, marrying fellow violinist Lodovico Sirmen. She composed six, written about the same time as the early Haydn quartets such as his Opp.1 and 9. Hers were first published in 1769. Other than the fact that they were written by a woman at this time, they are unremarkable. Other than as a curiosity, not for concert and I cannot recommend them to amateurs.



Friedrich Lux (1820-1895) was born in the German town of Ruhla. He was trained as an organist but by his mid thirties changed course and concentrated on conducting and composing. He wrote three string quartets. **String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.58**, was said to have won a prize in a competition in which Brahms and Robert Volkmann served as judges. There is not much in the way of melody in the opening movement, Allegro con brio,

which is almost entirely dominated by its rhythm. The second movement, Andantino con moto, is subtitled Idyll, In the field, at the brook, under the linden trees. Obviously, a kind of tone poem,

but the thematic material wanders around somewhat incoherently. The Menuetto, allegro con moto, is energetic but the theme, which is hard to discern, is not very fetching. The finale, Lento-Allegro, begins in promising fashion. The main movement, starts off as a fugue. For once, the themes are relatively discernable. The strongest of the four movements, but overall, one wonders what the competition was like. Not for concert performance, perhaps for amateurs. I am not familiar with his last two quartets, Opp.87 from 1892 and Op.95 from 1895.



Mykola Lysenko (1842-1912--sometimes transliterated as Nikolai Lysenko or Lissenko) is considered the father of Ukrainian chamber music much the way that Glinka is for the Russians. He was the first Ukrainian composer to write chamber music. In 1904, he founded the first music conservatory in the Ukraine in Kiev, which today bears his name. Lysenko was born in the Poltava district of the Ukraine. He first studied piano with his mother, then formally with teachers in Kiev. After taking a degree in the natural sciences at the University of Kiev, he attended the world famous Leipzig Conservatory where he studied composition with Carl Reinecke. An admirer of the Ukrainian poet Shevchenko, Lysenko became a nationalist for the Ukrainian cause as a student. He remained one for his entire life and was imprisoned for the cause as late as 1907 after composing a song in support of the Revolution of 1905. The bulk of Lysenko's music is for piano or for voice in one form or another such as opera, hymns, or chorales. His piano music often shows the influence of Chopin whereas his vocal music is almost always based on Ukrainian folk music. Lysenko spent considerable time trying to demonstrate the differences between Ukrainian and Russian folk melody. The only chamber music he is known to have composed is a string quartet and a string trio.

His **String Quartet in d minor** dates from 1868 when Lysenko was finishing his studies with Reinecke in Leipzig. The big, opening movement, Allegro non tanto, begins in a rather dramatic, somewhat operatic fashion. The themes bear some resemblance to those of Glinka's opera *Ruslan and Ludmilla*. Despite the movement's length, the drama and forward motion are almost never relaxed. The simple but charming melody of the following Adagio is in the form of a chorale. The manuscript only has three movements and it is not known whether there was a fourth movement or whether the third movement was meant as the finale. It is an engaging Minuetto, allegretto scherzando. The quartet clearly showed promise and has many appealing qualities. For the concert hall, only for historical purposes illustrating early Ukrainian chamber music. However, amateurs will enjoy it.



Boris Lyatoshinsky (1895-1968), was born in the Ukrainian town of Zhytomir then part of the Russian Empire. After studying piano and violin locally, he moved to Kyiv (Kiev) and enrolled in the law school of Kiev University as well as simultaneously entering the Kiev Conservatory, studying composition with Reinhold Glière. After graduating from the Conservatory, he obtained a teaching position there and subsequently became

a professor both there and at the Moscow Conservatory. Besides composing, he was an active and sought after conductor. He is generally considered the father of contemporary Ukrainian music. He wrote in all genres and did not ignore chamber music, which includes five string quartets, a piano quartet, a piano quintet, two piano trios and instrumental several sonatas. His earliest compositions were romantic and lyrical in style, influenced mostly by Schumann and Borodin. Later, the impressionist music of Scria-

bin attracted him. However, under Stalinism, he returned to using folkloric themes, especially those of Ukraine. I am not familiar with **String Quartet in d minor No.1 Op.1**. It dates from 1915 and was dedicated to his teacher Gliere. I have not played but only heard **String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.4** dates from 1922. It is in four movements—Allegro non troppo, Intermezzo molto lento, Allegro vivace a leggiero and allegro molto. It shows the influence of Scriabin and post French Impressionism. I have only listened to a recording of **String Quartet No.3** which was composed in 1928 and revised two years before his death in 1966. It is in five movements—Prelude, Nocturne, Scherzo, Intermezzo, and Postlude. It mostly sounds like music to a film noir murder. Scary music with lots of riveting tonal effects. No amateurs are going to play this work but it should be given concert performance and will make a strong impression on audiences

String Quartet No.4 in d minor, Op.43 dates from 1943. It is subtitled Suite on Ukrainian Themes and is in five movements: I. Lento, II. Allegretto semplice, III. Allegro ben ritmico IV. Andante sostenuto and V. Allegro scherzando. Unfortunately, the work has never been recorded by a string. This is a more approachable work, composed under the restraints of Stalinist social realism. In my opinion, this is a superb modern masterpiece. A good work for concert but beyond most amateurs.



The son of a well known Parisian journalist, **Albéric Magnard** (1865-1914) studied with Theodore Dubois and Jules Massenet at the Paris Conservatory. Later, he took lessons with Vincent d'Indy and then taught at the Schola Cantorum. He was killed in the First World War. Magnard did not write a great deal of music, and left only three chamber works of note, one of them being his

String Quartet in e minor, Op.16, It dates from 1903. The opening movement, Sonate, begins with a powerful and impassioned theme which gives way suddenly to a languid melancholy second theme. A captivating movement, Serenade, is quite extraordinary, nervous and ethereal—really more scherzo than serenade. The leisurely slow movement, Chant funèbre has a Brucknerian breadth and tonality as heard through a French filter. A bright and ebullient finale, entitled Danses, presents a series of folk dances, waltzes and fugues very idiosyncratically. Nowadays, the only French quartets one hears are the Debussy and the Ravel. In my opinion, this work is every bit as good. Highly recommended both for concert and home.



Amanda Maier (1853-1894) was born in the Swedish town of Landskrona. Her early musical studies on violin and piano were with her father. Subsequently, she studied at the Stockholm Conservatory, winning awards not only for her violin playing but also for her ability on the organ and cello as well as for her compositional ability. After graduating, she continued her studies at the Leipzig Conservatory where she studied

composition with Carl Reinecke and violin with Engelbert Röntgen, concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. While in Leipzig, she composed several works, among them the String Quartet in A Major dating from 1877. After leaving Leipzig, she spent the next few years touring as a concert violinist before marrying the composer Julius Röntgen, the son of her teacher. Amanda was a fairly prolific composer up until her marriage by which time she had two piano quartets, a piano trio, two string quartets and several other instrumental works to her credit. Most of these works are still in manuscript and several, unfortunately, have been lost. After her marriage she more or less gave up her career.

Brahms and Grieg were among those who praised her music highly. Only a few of her compositions were ever published.

The score to her **String Quartet in A Major** languished in manuscript form and is now located in the Stockholm Theater and Music library. We obtained a copy of it in 2019. It is impossible to tell whether she completed the work because the first and last movements are missing some sheets of the manuscript. However, the first movement, an interesting Allegro, is all but complete except for some final measures and as such was not difficult to finish. The second movement is a lovely, highly romantic Andante, full of appealing melody. The third movement, Allegro non troppo is a cross between a scherzo and a lilting intermezzo and has a nicely contrasting trio. The manuscript to the finale, an exciting Presto, has one long section and several shorter ones, clearly meant to be connected to each other. It can be recommended to professionals and amateur ensembles alike.



Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973) was born in Venice. He studied with Enrico Bossi and Max Bruch. He basically was not interested in the Austro-German musical developments of the 18th and 19th centuries and looked to early Italian music for his sources of inspiration. His compositions are difficult to characterize. Many of his later works are atonal, others not.

He wrote eight string quartets but only his **String Quartet No.1**, dating from 1920, which he titled **Rispetti e Strambotti** has gained any traction. It is still a tonal work but not in a traditional way. The melodic lines often resemble the expressive recitatives of Monteverdi's operas. He reintroduced free polyphony to Italian music and in this quartet he paid tribute to two old Italian verse forms, *rispetti* (love poems from a gentleman to a lady) and *strombotti* (simple refrain poems or songs). The quartet eschews the idea of thematic development that had been central to sonata form, a critical component of string quartet outer movements since the early days of the genre. Instead, the piece is built of twenty discrete sections, or "panels," grouped into three main divisions that roughly correspond to three traditional movements. The main theme is not so much varied as it is deconstructed, to a point where it loses its identity and disappears. This happens halfway through the quartet, in a section set off from the rest of the piece by four measures of silence at each end. Here all four players set off on their own paths, talking at once with no theme, nothing in common. As noted, the music of this quartet remains tonal, although the very free polyphony generates sharp dissonances and helps along the composer's anti-Romantic intentions. The music has strong dramatic impact, a sense of the modern and daring, and yet a haunting sense of the archaic. This work belongs in the concert hall and can be recommended to experienced amateurs of good technical abilities.



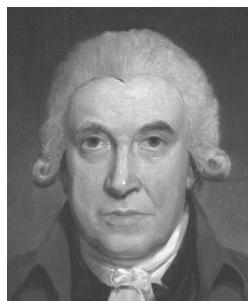
Witold Maliszewski (1873-1939) was born in the town of Mohyliv-Podilskyi, then part of Russian Poland now located in Ukraine. His initial studies were at the Imperial Conservatory in Tiflis (now Tbilisi) with Mikhail Ivanov-Ippolitov. He then attended the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov. In 1908, he obtained the position of conductor of the Odessa Symphony Orchestra. He was ac-

tive in Odessa until 1920 and was a founder and first director of the Odessa Conservatory. Due to the Russian Revolution, he moved to Warsaw in 1920 where he held several positions, including Professor of Composition at the Warsaw Conservatory. He composed in most genres and his chamber music was held in particularly high regard, winning several competition prizes. He wrote three string quartets.

His **String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.2** dates from 1903. The opening movement, Moderato, has for its main theme a rather moving, elegaic melody and the conclusion the movement is particularly effective. The jovial Scherzo, allegro vivo which comes next plays well and is original sounding. The Andante con moto is full of Slavic charm. The finale, Allegro, is another effective movement with a magnificent fugue in the middle.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major, Op.6 appeared in 1905. It begins with a Largo introduction, which because of the first violin part, resembles a brief recitative leading to the main section Allegro with its upbeat, energetic, lyrical and plastic themes. The second movement, Andante con tristezza is in essence a romance. Two quicker sections, poco piu mosso, provide excellent contrast and have considerable charm. Next comes an appealing dance-like Allegretto scherzando, with its rather striking rhythm that gives the music considerable lilt. The very effective and lively finale, Allegro, begins as a fugue and moves forward with great energy interspersed with slower and more lyrical sections.

String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major, Op.15 appeared in 1914. It differs from conventional form in that it is only in three movement and the first movement, written on a large scale, is a theme and set of nine variations which is preceded by a lengthy Lento introduction. These variations are not only skillful but also captivating and show that Maliszewski was a master of this form. The second movement, though marked Andante tranquillo, quickly becomes quite lively and even agitated. The finale begins with a short Allegretto introduction which leads to an Allegro ma non troppo which provides a sharp contrast and appeals by virtue of its fine workmanship. Players are sure to get much pleasure from these beautifully written and always interesting three string quartets which present no great technical difficulties and in which all of the parts are grateful to play. All three deserve concert performance and can be warmly recommended to amateurs,



Vincenzo Manfredini (1737-1799) was born in the Italian town of Pistoia near Florence. He spend most of his career at the Imperial Russian Court in St Petersburg conducting Italian opera. Upon retirement, he returned to the city of Bologna where he taught and composed six string quartets sometime in the early 1780s. Whether or not he knew anything of what Haydn and Mozart and the other Vienna Classical composers were doing,

or for that matter Boccherini, one thing is certain, his quartets bear no resemblance to theirs. These are simple, sometimes charming works. The thematic material is ordinary and forgettable, but they are listed here because he wrote them specifically for amateur players. Unlike concertante works or those in which the first violin dominates, the thematic material is passed around and often shared by two voices at the same time. While there is nothing special about these works and I am not suggesting you search for them, however, amateurs who come across them may well spend a few pleasant hours with them.



Joan Manen (1883-1971) was born in the city of Barcelona. Like his countryman Pau (Pablo) Casals, he considered himself a Catalan and not a Spaniard. He was an amazing musical prodigy on both the violin and piano. After studying at the Barcelona Conservatory, he embarked on an international career as a violin virtuoso, giving some 4,000 concerts over a period of some 60 years, during which time he performed frequently with Pablo Casals, Saint Saëns, and Enrique Granados and played under the batons

of Antonin Dvorak, Richard Strauss, Fritz Reiner, Felix Weingartner, Bruno Walter, Willem Mengelberg as well as many others. He regularly performed with every major orchestra in Europe and America. As a violinist, he was considered the equal of Pablo Sarasate and the only Spanish violinist to achieve international fame. German critics hailed him as one of the most outstanding musicians of his time. He was the first violinist in the world to record the complete Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Bruch violin concertos as well as several works by Paganini widely considered too difficult to perform in public. He also turned his talents to composing and his operas were favorably compared to those of his friend Richard Strauss. Much of his career was spent residing in Germany when he was not touring and his reputation there exceeded that which he enjoyed in Spain. In 1930, he founded the Barcelona Philharmonic Orchestra and served as its conductor and music director for several decades.

Manen's **String Quartet in F Major** was published in Vienna in 1922. Its dedication to one Maurice M. Sternberger (1854-1938), a wealthy New York stock broker give us some hints about its creations. Manen often found himself in New York and was an invitee to the most important musical club in the United States, the Bohemians whose membership literally read like a who's who in classical music. Famous artists as well as important patrons of music belonged. Sternberger was one of the latter and no doubt either contributed to Manen or in some other way proved useful. The Quartet is in three movement which all have titles. The first movement is called *Mati, Transparencia*. In Catalan, *mati* means to understand to perceive. The music undergoes many tempi and mood changes. *Transparencia* is transparency. The short, lively second movement is entitled *Mig-dia, exultacio*. *Mig-da* in Catalan means mid-day or noon. *Exultacio* means joy or reveling. The music, however, is rather like a bumpy horse ride. The finale is marked *Vespre e inquietuts*. *Vespre* is evening and *inquietuts* is worry, concern, restlessness. The music starts off quietly but then becomes extremely agitated and ominous and at times violent. This is an interesting and in many ways an original sounding work deserving of concert performance but which can also be recommended to experienced and amateur players.



Henri Marteau (1874-1934) was born in the French city of Reims. It was said that as a boy of 5, he was presented with a toy violin by Paganini's only student, the virtuoso Sivori. He took private lessons from Hubert Leonard, head of the violin department at the Paris Conservatory and soon became one of the leading soloists of his time. Later he taught at the Geneva Conservatory and was appointed as Joseph Joachim's successor at the

Hochschule for Musik in Berlin. Besides his solo work, Marteau was a strong advocate of chamber music, frequently taking part in chamber music concerts and a great number of his compositions are for chamber ensembles. He was friends with many of the leading personalities of his time, including Brahms, Reger and many others. He wrote three string quartets.

His **String Quartet No.1 in D flat Major, Op.5** dates from 1904 and is in three movements. The big opening movement, *Molto moderato*, has many attractive themes beginning with the main subject first given out by the cello. The development and introduction of subsequent themes can be tricky. The middle movement, *Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo*, opens sounding rather like Paul Dukas. The main theme is more rhythmic than melodic and somewhat strident. There is a lovely side theme which does not appear often enough. The bridge passages contain devilishly difficult running passages. The finale is longer than the first two movements together. Titled *Introduction et Rondo*, it begins with substantial introduction at slow, tempo, sounding lugubrious and slightly downcast. This introduction is so long as to disquali-

fy it as an introduction and instead must be considered a slow movement welded to a faster concluding movement. It is very effective. The main theme of the *Allegro* is closely related to that of the Introduction. As such, it too is slightly melancholy. The tempo for the most part is closer to an *allegretto*. The introduction returns in the movement dragging what interest there is down. It is rather a long time before the coda appears in canonic fashion. This quartet has many attractive features and perhaps could qualify for a concert performance, although I found the last movement a bit of a downer. The key makes for intonation problems. Only recommended for technically assured amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.9 dates from 1905. the opening movement, *Moderato, quasi andante* begins with a short cello solo. It is dark hued but there are burst of sunshine from time to time. Next comes a *Scherzo allegro molto e giocoso*. This is a playful, wild romp, full of high spirits and altogether superb. The third movement, *Andante sostenuto*, begins quietly in a little foreboding and in a funereal vein. A sad, downtrodden melody is presented as the main subject. The mood remains subdued throughout. The finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, loudly blasts off immediately from the starting gate but then as if it stumbles into a pit of sadness, and then a brief wild episodes. Short snippets here and there and the overall feel is as if one is in a mad fun house, very unsettling. More approachable than the first, it will do well in concert. But again, it is not for your average amateur group.

String Quartet No.3 in C Major, Op.17 dates from 1916 and is one of his most accessible works. The big, opening movement, *Commodo*, begins with a sunny, playful melody. The music is painted on a broad canvas and features some rather interesting harmonic surprises. The extraordinary, second movement, *Adagio molto*, bears the title given in both French--*Hymne à la douleur*--and in German--*Hymne an den Schmerz*. It opens darkly and slowly becomes a dirge that is interrupted by sudden but brief chromatic outbursts of pain. But then in the powerful, dramatic climax of the movement, a torrent of sound, of dread and horror, is loosed. One cannot wonder if this movement, written as it was during the height of the First World War, was meant to express the horrific experience that had grasped the European continent. Then comes a upbeat *Scherzo, allegro*, the first section to which is played entirely *pizzicato*. It makes an indelible impression. There is a jazzy feel it which is confirmed when the players pick up their bows and play a somewhat lopsided dance, rather like a Viennese waltz not quite right. The strident, *Adagio* introduction to the finale, immediately recalls the mood of the second movement. The main section, *Allegro*, opens with a subdued unisono which suddenly explodes in a canopy of different moods rising to joyful climax but then immediately followed by a said plaint first heard in the cello and then the violin. The music continues on through several twists and turns to a rollicking coda. This is a highly original and riveting early modern work which truly deserves concert performance where it is will make an indelible impression. Though not a work for beginners, it is not beyond experienced amateurs of good technical ability.



Bohuslav Martinu (1890-1959) Martinu was born in the Czech town of Polička. He studied violin briefly at the Prague Conservatory but was expelled for failure to diligently pursue his studies and from then on studied privately. During WWI, he worked as a teacher and then served as a violinist in the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1923 he emigrated to Paris and

became a pupil of Albert Roussel. When France was invaded by Germany he emigrated to the United States, settling in New York where he taught at the Mannes College of Music. Among his many students was Alan Hovhaness. In 1953 he returned to Europe. He wrote at least seven string quartets.

His **String Quartet No.1** is a massive work, completed in 1918. It combines the idioms of the late-Romantic and French Impressionist era. It is not actually his first string quartet as he began writing quartets at the age of eight. The first one he said was based on a Czech poem called *The Three Horsemen*. This quartet is in four movements: Moderato—Allegro ma non troppo, Andante moderato; Allegro non troppo, and Allegro con brio. One can clearly hear the influence of Debussy and Ravel and structurally, he follows Cesar Franck's cyclic format and for this reason has traveled with the nickname *The French*. Tonally it can perhaps be considered in the key of e flat minor, but it goes through many keys and tempo changes. It will appeal to those fans of the French Impressionists but with a more modern bent.

String Quartet No.2 dates from 1925 and is considerably more concise than his first quartet. It is a three-movements. The first movement, Moderato, allegro vivace, begins with a slow introduction which presents the central idea. The main body of the movement is a highly rhythmic. Three themes are presented first without development. The music is nearly always polyphonic. The second movement, Andante, is harmonically static but highly expressive. Its strange atmosphere is the result of imaginative use of the low registers of the violins. The finale is a dancing and virtuosic Allegro, that vaguely suggest Czech folk music.

String Quartet No.3 was composed in 1929. It, too, has three very short movements—Allegro, Andante and vivo. It was perhaps aimed at Parisian audiences who were mad, at that time, about avant-garde music.. Its very skillful part-writing gives each of the four instruments a separate identity. The independence of these lines often takes them into major dissonant clashes with each other. In the outer movements this leads to a lively atmosphere, but there is a tragic element in the slow middle movement. One hears elements of jazz, which throughout the 1920s was the rage in Paris. The opening Allegro, starts with a slinky rhythm played on plucked cello and viola col legno -- that is, with the strings being tapped by the back of the bow. To this unusual percussive effect, the solo violin plays a vampish figuration in a low registers. This figure will be played on all the instruments at some point, often varied, while other strings play fast runs that often break into a jazz rhythm. The jazz elements in the first movement give the middle movement, Andante, the impression of a kind of blues effect. Disturbed chords and low trills add a dark emotional note to the movement, which rises to a crying central section and ends in a mood of resigned anguish, except for an unexpectedly calming final chord. All four strings scurry about in a slightly macabre concluding Vivo. An interesting work. So short, it could be called a miniature quartet. Certainly worthwhile for concert. Doubtful for amateurs.

Martinu wrote **String Quartet No. 4** in Paris in 1937 at a time when he was increasingly drawing on Czech and Moravian sources for inspiration. The first movement, Allegro poco moderato, begins with an angular melody, which leads to a more lyrical second section, starting with a repeated bass pattern of accompaniment. The second movement, Scherzo, is propelled forward by its own impetus and has a trio section with a lyrical melody initially given to the first violin and then, briefly, to the cello. The viola starts the Adagio, which comes third, with a plaintive melodic line and prominently features the use of glissandi. The concluding Allegro is dominated by its rhythms which do conjure up Czech dances, perhaps in very modern dress.

String Quartet No. 5 was also written in Paris in 1938 and dedicated to the Belgian Pro Arte Quartet. The first movement, Allegro non troppo, opens with harshly dissonant and percussive chords and continues on in a dark mood which is only occasionally and briefly interrupted by more lyrical passages. The movement ends with viola and cello leading to a slower conclusion, under a sustained first violin pedal note high above. In the Adagio which follows, the first violin, accompanied by pizzicato in the viola and a muted second violin and cello, offers a sad melo-

dy. Next is a vigorous, astringent Scherzo. The slow introduction to the last movement, Lento, allegro, begins with a poignant violin melody taken up in turn by the cello which leads to highly chromatic and frantic Allegro. I do not think many will find this an appealing work. Not for amateurs.

String Quartet No.6 was composed in 1946 while he was in the United States. In three movements. The first movement, Allegro moderato, is full of vitality although there is a restless quality about it. Seemingly tonal in parts but not without substantial dissonances. The central Andante has lyrical melodic lines and slower harmonies that stand out against fairly rapid figurations in supporting voices which creates considerable tension. The final movement, beginning Allegro and then kicking up into Allegro con brio, is rather less pessimistic, full of driving, rapid harmonic motion and terse melodies. Perhaps the most impressive of his quartets. A good choice for concerts but beyond all but the best amateurs who must be of professional ability.

String Quartet No.7 usually referred to Concerto da Camera dates from 1947, also in three movements. Perhaps this and a vague affinity to the Baroque definition of chamber concerto. The opening movement, Poco allegro, is lively and upbeat and one might say it is in Neo-Baroque style. The middle movement, Andante, has several lovely, relaxed themes of the sort rarely heard in any of his quartets. The joyous finale, Allegro vivo, is clearly neo-classical with hints of Haydn and Beethoven. Concert audiences and good amateurs will enjoy this one.



Joseph Marx (1882-1964) was born in the Austrian city of Graz but spent most of his life in Vienna where for many years he taught and was director of the Vienna Hochschule for Music. He never accepted the 12 tone revolution and continued like many others such as Franz Schmidt, Eric Korngold, Alexander Zemlinsky, and Karl Weigl to write in the late romantic idiom. He composed 4 string quartets.

The first, **Quartetto Chromatico**, dates from 1936 and is a shorter version of an earlier quartet. The opening Allegro cantabile sounds a bit like Puccini's Chrysanthemums. This is followed by a powerful Scherzo. The slow movement has a grim quality to it and shows some stylistic similarities to Schoenberg's Verkärte Nacht. The finale, Allegro, is a rondo which begins in C Major but then departs on a highly chromatic journey.

His **Quartetto in modo Antico** was composed the next year in 1937. The opening Allegro poco moderato sounds more modern than one might expect, in part, because it based on the music of Palestrina. The following Presto is an excellent example of the modal style Marx used here. Next comes an impressive Adagio molto in the Phrygian mode. It comes the closest to recreating the mood of ancient music with its ghostly chorale. The main feature of the finale, Vivace, is its intricate double fugue.

The third work, **Quartetto in Modo Classico** dates from 1940 and continues the style of the Vienna Classical Period as if it survived into the 20th century. The beautiful opening Allegro con brio recalls Mozart in the same way Schoenberg's D Major quartet of 1897 did. An elegiac Adagio follows. A lilting Tempo di minuetto comes next. The finale, Poco presto, is the most modern sounding of the movements and is written in a neo-classical style. These are three very fine works from a composer who is clearly a master craftsman. They deserve to be heard in concert and will surely be enjoyed by amateurs who are able to get the music.

Daniel Mason (1873-1953) was born in Brookline, Massachusetts. He came from a long line of musicians. He studied with John Knowles Paine at Harvard University and later privately with George Chadwick. He pursued a career as a teacher, mostly at Columbia University in New York, City and also composed.



Mason's compositional idiom was romantic. He admired the Austro-Germanic composers of the nineteenth century, especially Brahms and disliked impressionism as well as the modernist musical developments of the 20th century. Mason sought to increase respect for American music, sometimes incorporating indigenous and popular motifs, such as popular songs or Negro spirituals, into his scores or evoking them

through suggestive titles.

His **String Quartet on Negro Themes in g minor, Op.19** was completed in 1919. It is three movements. The opening Allegro comodo, ma con spirit, features a lot of rhythmic pounding double stops. In my opinion, it sounds as much if not more American Indian than of Negro spirituals. The middle movement, Largo tranquillo, is a deeply felt, lyrical affair. Perhaps the themes are there but they are deeply veiled in syrupy romanticism which despite any dislike of Impressionism, sounds for all the world as if it was influenced by Impressionism. The finale, Allegro moderato, dramatico, certainly opens in dramatic fashion with a loud tremolo in all of the voices. The main theme is a playful melody. Again, to my ear, I do not hear much of traditional Negro melodies. I claim to be no expert on such themes and I am sure Mason must have know what he was doing. Yet, if the title had not contained those words, I doubt few would notice any use of Negro melodies. It is not without interest but it does sound like many another work. I do not know if it is worthwhile bringing it into concert. This is not a bad work, but to me, it sometimes sounds like an academic composer trying awfully hard, although I must say there are some effective moments. As for amateurs, this is not an easy work to play. It can be handled by good players but not sight-read.



Emilie Mayer (1812-1883) was born in the German town of Friedland. Although she received piano and organ lessons as a child, she did not pursue a musical career as her widowed father needed her to help keep house for him. It was only upon his death at the age of 28 that she pursued formal studies moving to the city of Stettin (since 1945 Szczecin in Poland) where she took

composition lessons from Carl Loewe, the City Music Director. Loewe considered her extraordinarily talented and as a result she worked extremely hard, dedicating herself to composition. On Loewe's recommendation she went to Berlin where she studied with Adolph Marx, then a leading teacher in theory and composition and a family friend of the Mendelssohns. It is through him that he introduced her to them and their circle of musical friends. She was a fairly prolific composer, especially in view of the fact that she started to compose rather late. Among her many works number eight symphonies, six piano trios, two piano quartets, seven string quartets, two string quintets, seven violin sonatas, and twelve cello sonatas. I am familiar with two of these quartets.

Her **String Quartet in g minor, Op.14** is the only one of the seven that she wrote which was published in her lifetime and the only one given an opus number. It is difficult to know exactly when it was composed as she did not begin to publish her works until about 1860 and many of these were completed decades before their date of publication. Judging from the style, it seems likely the quartet was completed in the 1840's. The opening movement, Allegro appassionato, is for much of its duration a stormy affair. The main theme features a dialogue between the first violin and the cello. The second movement is a fleet-footed, thrusting Scherzo with a gentler contrasting trio section. A lovely and deeply felt Adagio comes next. The high point comes when

Mayer quotes the famous Bach Chorale "Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten". (Whoever lets only the dear God reign). The exciting finale, Allegro molto, breaks forth immediately, rushing here and there as it gallops along. This quartet, though well received when performed in concert, did not enter the repertoire which it probably would have done if she had been a man. In my opinion, it is the equal of the quartets of Mendelssohn and Schumann. The fact that it was published two decades after it was composed did not help matters. Not only is this an historically important work by an excellent woman composer when few were writing, but it can stand on its own as a first class piece of work. It deserves to be heard in concert and will also be enjoyed by amateurs.

The only other quartet of hers with which I am familiar is her **String Quartet in e minor**. It appears to have been composed in the first part of the 1850s. The opening Allegro maestoso begins with the cello given the lead. The main section of the movement is highly dramatic, riveting. The accompaniment here is a little busy, but certainly no worse than what one finds in Mendelssohn quartets. There is a march like second subject. Again, a Scherzo comes second. Mendelssohnian, lots of movement, very well done. Next is an Adagio molto espressivo. The main subject is an example of her gift of melody. The finale, Allegro appassionato, is exciting and full of forward motion. She certainly knew how to write a good finale. Much of what I wrote of her Op.14 quartet applies here. This is certainly a quartet to interest amateurs and which could be given concert performance.



Joseph Mayseder (1789-1863) was born in Vienna. He began to study the violin at an early age and was quickly recognized as a child prodigy and was therefore turned over to the most famous violinists and teachers then in Vienna, Paul and Anton Wranitzky and Ignaz Schuppanzigh. He also studied composition with Emanuel Aloys Förster. At the age of 21, he was appointed concertmaster of the Vienna Court Opera and subsequently was appointed soloist of the K. und K. (Royal and Imperial) orchestra, which he later conducted. He was not only considered one of the finest violin soloists of his day, but also chaired Vienna's leading string quartet. In addition to this, he was a respected composer, mainly of chamber music, whose works achieved great popularity not only in his lifetime but right up until the First World War. He was a sought after teacher and the famous soloist. Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst numbered among his students. He wrote seven string quartets. I have played three of these.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor, Op.6 was composed around 1815. The main theme of the opening Allegro is an upward series of passages, not particularly noteworthy, however the side themes are more attractive. Not bad but a little too busy. The second movement, Andante, is somber with most of the attractive melodic material to be found in the first violin. A good movement. The third movement, Minuetto, allegretto, is more rhythm than melody. The finale, Allegro molto, starts off almost orchestral, dramatic, exciting and a fitting movement for a finale. I think not for the concert hall, but amateurs will enjoy it.

String Quartet No.5 in D Major is a youthful work dating from sometime around 1815. It is a highly dramatic, and often operatic work. The first movement, Allegro, opens with a brief, slow introduction in the lower voices before the music takes off with the cello initially taking the lead. What is surprising is that this is closer to a work of the middle Romantic period, anticipating Mendelssohn and Schumann. The second movement, Andante, is a set of six interesting variations based on a simple, sweet theme. The third movement, Scherzo, has a somewhat heavy feel due to the initial theme resting with the lower two voices. The second theme could have been from a Rossini opera. The finale,

Allegro vivace, begins as a kind of *moto perpetuum* in the violin with others soon taking part in this rousing affair. This is a good work both for concert and home.

String Quartet No.6 in G Major, Op.23 dates from around 1820. It has only three movements. The first, *Allegro*, overflows with captivating melodies. There are some gymnastic episodes required of the first violin, no doubt, to showcase Mayseder's prodigious technique. The middle movement, *Adagio*, is adequate, pretty but not particularly memorable. The finale, *Rondo presto*, is a bumptious ride in 6/8, full of forward motion and fairly exciting. There are also some lovely contrasting themes. Nothing too deep here, but lots of fun and certainly pleasant enough for concert. Amateurs will need a top notch first violinist.



John Blackwood McEwen (1868-1948) was born in the Scottish border town of Hawick. He studied at the University of Glasgow and the Royal Academy of Music. He later became a professor at the Academy and then its principal. He was a co-founder of the British Society of Composers (1905) and himself composed in most genres, with the string quartet being central to his oeuvre. Some sources say he wrote 17 string quartets, other say 19. During his

lifetime, he was considered one of Britain's leading composers and a pioneer in many aspects. That McEwen's works did not become better known was in part due to the fact that he did very little to promote them. Many treasures await players and listeners alike. I can make no claim to having played all 19 but I have been fortunate enough to manage 11 of them which should give the reader a good feeling for his oeuvre.

His **String Quartet No.2 in a minor** was composed in 1898 and was published in 1903. The main theme of the first movement, *Allegro marcato*, dominated by its rhythm but the melody is quite ingratiating. A second and more lyrical subject has an elegiac quality and stands out by virtue of its chromatic coloring. It is followed by yet another impressive theme, a kind of Scottish reel. The main subject of the second movement, *Andante quasi adagio*, resembles a *Siciliano* in style. Again, the melody is impressive. The thematic material of third movement, *Vivace*, especially the main theme and the trio section, are clearly Scottish. An *Allegro vivace* with its clever writing and appealing melodies tops off this work. A excellent work find for concert and not at all hard to play hence warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in e minor dates from 1901. It has three movements and opens with a mysterious, dark hued *Adagio* which leads to edgy, nervous *Allegro*. The material is more rhythmic than melodic. There are several tempo changes back and forth between the two sections. The middle movement, *Allegretto poco vivace*, begins with a continuous repetition of a short motif in the cello, rather like an *ostinato*, which is gradually developed. There is a slower section which provides a bit of contrast. The overall effect is of something going to happen which doesn't. The finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is like much of this work, driven by its rhythm rather than memorable thematic material. The second theme, though rhythmic is also tuneful. This is the most effective of the quartet, a decent work. I do not think it would make a strong impression in concert but it is strong enough to go there. There are some ensemble difficulties, especially in the first movement.

In many ways, McEwen's **String Quartet No.4 in c minor**, which dates from 1905, is his most daring. In the very lyrical and at times rhapsodic first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, his use of polyphony anticipates Bartok by two decades. It opens with a nervous tremolo, leading to violent and strident sections, although there interludes of more lyrical sections. The tremolo reappears from time to time adding a sense of unrest. The second movement, *Vivace* which serves as a scherzo, recalls the finale of

Beethoven's Op.127 Quartet, only in a far more agitated setting and certainly not in any tonal sense. The constant pulsating accompaniment creates a mood of unease. The final two movements are very Scottish in character. First comes a highly chromatic *Andante espressivo* which is a kind of sad shepherd's lament or a Scottish dirge. The finale, *Larghetto-Vivace*, begins with a pregnant, slow introduction which leads to a high-spirited romp. This is a candidate for concert performance and to experienced amateur players of good ability.

String Quartet No.6 in A Major, subtitled *Biscay* dates from around 1913, when McEwen was living on the southwestern coast of France in a fishing village. Each of the three movements is given a subtitle and perhaps the works was meant as a kind of program music. The opening movement, *Le Phare* (the lighthouse), *Allegro maestoso*, is not very majestic. Here again, the tremolo is very prominent. The effect is more like a boat on the sea. Some pundits have heard the tumultuous Atlantic pounding the shore. I don't know, but there is certainly an upbeat mood of exhilaration. Cannot conjure up any idea of a lighthouse from this. The middle movement, *Les Dunes*, *Andante mesto*, is quiet, wayward and sounds like something a French impressionist composer could have written. Do not know what is *mesto* about dunes, the music, however, is effective and evocative, just not of dunes. The finale, *Le Racleuse* (perhaps the scrapers or scraping). Again the music does not seem to have much to do with scraping, but rather is a very high spirited, good natured *gigue*. It would do well in concert and is accessible to amateurs.

String Quartet No.7 in E flat Major dates from 1916 and is subtitled *Threnody*. It is in one continuous movement but four sections, *Lento—Allegro molto—Poco meno mosso—Lento*. A *threnody*, of course, is a lament, a song or poem in memory of a deceased person. And certainly, the opening *Lento* gives this impression without any doubt. The entire piece, is dominated by a dour, pulsing, sad theme and even the quicker section do not lighten the mood. The concluding measures quote an English lament 'The flowers of the forest' which commemorated the fallen Scottish soldiers in the Battle of Flodden against the English in 1513. The fact that the quartet was composed in the middle of World War I at a time when Britain had already lost the flower of a generation could well have been the impetus. An effective work, but lacking any real drama, it is sort of a downer which mitigates it being brought into the concert hall.

String Quartet No.8 in E flat Major also dates from around 1918. It was dedicated to Phillip L. Agnew, the publisher of the famous English humor magazine *Punch*. There is however, nothing humorous about this work. In three movements, it opens with a wistful *Allegro piacevole*. Wandering and with unmemorable thematic material. The middle movement, *Larghetto*, is sad but leaves no real lasting impression. The finale, *Allegretto*, is much better than the preceding two movements because it has some impressive thematic material, certainly by comparison by what has come before. I do not see why this should be performed in concert or worth the time of amateurs.

String Quartet No.13 in c minor dates from 1928. The opening *Moderato* is full of wandering notes splashed on the music paper, tonal but difficult to identify any real theme. An *Allegro vivace, scherzando* comes next. Here one can identify a theme from its repeated rhythmic structure. There are hints of Paul Dukas. A nice contrasting section follows. All in all, an effective scherzo which makes a good impression. The third movement, *Andante con moto*, does not seem to have much in the way of motif. It lingers and wallows. There is tremolo to create a sense of drama. I must say, one finds tremolo in almost every quartet, rather like Schubert's fondness for them in his late quartets. It starts out weak but gets better as it moves along and even gets a bit dramatic at times. The finale, *Vivace*, has several tempo changes, including *tranquillo* and *piu lento*. It begins with a nervous theme over pulsing accompaniment and sounds a bit what

Shostakovich did two decades later. The slower tempi do not ruin things but provide brief relief from the edgy proceedings which have come before. Despite the weak first movement, the last three are good enough to justify concert performance. It can also be recommended to good amateurs.

McEwen subtitled **String Quartet No.15** 'A Little Quartet in modo scotico'. It is certainly filled with Scottish folk melody and while not a huge work, it is not really little for it is of standard length. It dates from 1936 when McEwen was 68. The opening movement begins with an Allegro giocoso fanfare, full of good spirits which does not last long and is followed by a droning, bagpipe-like lament. The moods are juxta positioned throughout. The middle movement, an Adagio, begins giving off the appearance of an improvisation for the first violin to a gloomy accompaniment in the other voices. Soon a Scottish melody takes and holds center stage. In the finale, Vivace, McEwen gives the tempo as "in reel time." The movement begins in a wild, raucous fashion followed by a more sedate section, again sounding of droning bagpipes, which relieves the frantic pace. Worthwhile, perhaps for concert, in parts not easy to play.

String Quartet No.16 subtitled **Provencale** was composed immediately after No.15 in 1936. Presumably McEwen was living or had been living in Provence. The three movements each have subtitles. The opening movement, Moderato capriccio is subtitled Summer Morning, La place du Bon Roi, perhaps a reference to Henry IV who was known as the Good King or Good King Henri. Anyway, the restless, theme less music does not particularly conjure up anything in particular. The middle movement, Adagio, subtitled Summer Evening, Le Col d 'Ange. The music perhaps is a kind of night music but I do not see what it has to do with Le Col d 'Ange, a steep climb used by bicyclists, especially in the Tour de France. The finale, Molto vivace, subtitled Le Mistral. Le Mistral is a strong cold wind which blows off the western coast of southern France. It is evocative as long as you knew the subtitle. Not recommended for concert or home.

String Quartet No.17 is also known as Fantasia for String Quartet. It was finished in 1947 in the year before his death at which time he was 79. In one movement with many sections: Andante quasi adagio—Allegro—Meno mosso. The cello opens the proceedings with a kind of improvisation, with no discernible theme. When the others enter, a small part of the improvisation serves as the theme. Played this quartet twice. The first time several years ago, after which it was put back up on the shelf and I never expected to take it off again, which I did only to make for this guide. There are a lot of different moods and tempi, but all in all, though not unpleasant, it is just mostly forgettable.



Ludwig Meinardus (1827-1896) was born in the German town of Hooksiel. He showed his early compositions to Robert Schumann who encouraged Meinardus to enter the newly established Leipzig Conservatory. Meinardus left before graduating and studied privately with various teachers, including Adolf Marx in Berlin. He pursued the dual career of music critic and composer, serving as a choral director in various cities. Not a prolific composer, most of his compositions were mostly for voice. He did, however, write two string quartets, a piano trio and a piano quintet. His music shows the influence of Schumann and late Beethoven. He wrote two string quartets. I am not familiar with the first.

His **String Quartet No.2 in C Major, Op.43** was completed in 1885. The work, in four movements, is primarily romantic in nature, sweet and lovely, though at times, showing a tonal waywardness reminiscent of late Beethoven. The opening movement, Kräftig und deutlich im Ausdruck, while giving no indication of the actual tempo begins in march-like fashion before morphing into a more lyrical almost sweet melody but still somewhat march

like, almost as if he could not make up his mind as to whether he really wanted it to sound like a march, but in the end it does. The second movement, Gesangvoll und innig bewegt, also gives no indication of tempo but Andante con moto would probably be accurate. It has a number of themes, none of which are developed. The first sweet, sugary and a bit sad, subsequent themes are march-like and thrusting. Next up is a deeply felt slow movement which leads to the finale, Rasch, which opens with a series of powerful chords of which the he seemed inordinately fond. A lively rondo follows. Not for concert, perhaps for amateurs.



It seems strange, at least to me, that of the late Romantic Finnish composers, only Sibelius has achieved a wide audience and Erkki Melartin remains all but unknown. **Erkki Melartin** (1875-1937) was born in the Finnish town of Käkisalme. He studied with Martin Wegelius in Helsinki and then in Vienna with Robert Fuchs, as did Sibelius. He pursued a career as a composer, conductor and teacher, serving as the director of the Helsinki Conservatory. He was a prolific composer who wrote in most genres. His music shows the influence of Mahler and is primarily written in the late, post Brahmsian idiom. He did not ignore chamber music and composed a piano quintet, a string quintet, four string quartets and several short works for piano trio. Unfortunately, most of these have remained languishing in manuscript form in libraries and have not been published. His four string quartets have recently been published.

String Quartet No.1 in e minor, Op.36 No.1 is the first of a set of three published as his Op.36 in 1904. Although published simultaneously, they were not written one after the other but over a period of six years. No.1 dates from 1896 when the composer was 21. It is in four movements and begins with an Allegro that features a lovely opening theme, somewhat on the melancholy side. A light, perhaps Brahmsian second subject follows. The second movement, Menuetto, scherzando is a blend of a updated minuet as a kind of relaxed scherzo. It comes with a finely contrasting trio. The Andante which serves as the third movement, though not so marked is an attractive theme followed by a series of original sounding and engaging variations. The finale, Presto, burst forth and comes to a sudden stop before finally taking off at full speed. The main subject conveys a sense of urgency. It is followed by a more genial second theme. This is an excellent work deserving of regular concert performance and recommended to experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor, Op.36 No.2 was completed in 1900. The opening Allegro energico, is powerful, dramatic and lyrical. A superb movement. It is followed by tuneful, sad Adagio. There are several dramatic episodes which are gorgeous. The third movement marked Intermezzo, allegro robustamente e vivace. This is not a traditional intermezzo but a pounding affair, somewhat heavy, interspersed with lighter more playful interludes. At the end of the Intermezzo Melartin places a Recitativo, andante moderato. It is an agitated outcry, ending with a cadenza for the first violin. The finale, Allegro risoluto, which sounds like an upbeat, rustic peasant dance. A first rate work recommended for concert and top technical and ensemble amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major, Op.36 No.3 came in 1902. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, is genial and sunny. Toward the end there is a wild and exciting conclusion with a big cello solo over the tremolo in the other voices which is played attacca. The second movement, Allegro moderato ma energico, is marked Fuga. This sounds like an updated even paced Bachian fugue in the beginning, which gradually picks up speed and becomes rather dramatic. The third movement is a lovely Andante. Next up is an Intermezzo, moderato e poco rubato. It does not start off sounding much like an intermezzo, but as

the music moves along it slowly assumes the character with a dark hued melody. There are many moods in this movement and intermezzo really does not apply to most. The finale is marked Scherzo, vivace is just that, playful and good natured. Perhaps not as impressive as the first two, but still a very appealing work, worthy of concert and home.

String Quartet No.4 Op.62 No.1 dates from 1910. The opening Moderato is a movement of many moods. It can be likened to traveling music painted on a large canvas. There are many appealing themes not without drama. At one point there are even echoes of Borodin which appear after highly dramatic climaxes. This is an impressive movement of many styles. Next is a big Scherzo, allegro vivace. It is bright and energetic, the motor which impels the music forward at great speed is the rhythm. The third movement is a muted Andante features an attractive, yearning melody over a pulsing accompaniment. The finale, has a short Andante introduction before the main section, a nervous Allegro which starts off all rhythm and next to no theme. Eventually one emerges but it is not dramatic enough to capture the listener's interest against the sawing accompaniment in the other voices. The second subject is slightly stronger but still has to compete against a very busy accompaniment. And it is this constant business which, I think, takes away from the music. I do not think it is the equal of the preceding three movements, although perhaps some will find it very exciting. I have mixed feelings as to whether this work should be presented in concert. Not easy though.



Arnold Mendelssohn (1855-1933) was a distant relation to Felix Mendelssohn. His early schooling took place in Berlin and Danzig. His formal music training was at the Royal Church Institute of Berlin where he studied organ, piano and composition with Friedrich Kiel. He subsequently worked as an organist at churches in Bonn and Bielefeld, eventually teaching at the Cologne Conservatory where Paul Hindemith was among his

many students. He composed nearly 300 works in virtually every genre from opera to chamber music, although he was perhaps best known for his church music. He was widely respected as a composer of the Neo-Romantic Style and his music was frequently performed until it was outlawed by the Nazi Regime. Only now is it being rediscovered.

His **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.67** dates from 1916. In the first movement, Allegro non troppo, the lyrical main theme is dominated by its rhythm. The second movement, Andante, is a simple, soulful melody and an excellent set of variations. In the place of a scherzo, there is a lop-sided, clever Waltz. The finale, Allegro molto, might be styled hunt music, which is jovial. This is a late Romantic work, a good work, not a great work but perhaps worthy of an appearance on the concert stage. Certainly a pick for amateurs.

His **String Quartet No.2 in B flat Major, Op.83** was composed between 1917-1918, although it was not published until 1926. While rejecting atonalism, he did not stand still but recognized the new, expanding boundaries of tonality and dissonance which had been pioneered by Mahler, Strauss and Reger, all the while retaining his own individuality. It is interesting to note that the most tonally adventurous part of the Quartet appears in the first movement, Allegro. The idiom, by and large is late Romantic, but jagged thematic material is continually perforated by dissonant leaps which create a strident quality to the music. In the rest of the quartet, this disappears and the material glides back to a neo-classical, late romantic style. The second movement, Andante, features a swaying melody with a middle section that has a very attractive recitativ between the viola and first violin. Next comes an Allegretto scherzoso which is a cross between a Ländler and a scherzo which results in an exotic dance-like quality.

The finale begins with a lengthy Lento introduction, at first meditative but rising to a dramatic climax. The main part of the movement is an upbeat, rustic Vivace. This is a more original and altogether stronger work than the first quartet, a work of the first order, a definite for the concert stage and one which can be recommended to amateurs as it poses no extreme technical challenges.

Of course, the Mendelssohn which everyone has heard of is **Felix Mendelssohn**. His quartets are part of the standard repertoire. Much has already been written about these works and there is nothing I can add. Quartet players should certainly familiarize themselves with his works.



Frantisek Adam Mica (1746-1811) was born in the Bohemian town of Jarmeritz today Jaroměřice nad Rokytnou. He moved to Vienna with his family and served in the Imperial Orchestra while at the same time holding a government administrative position. He studied with his uncle Frantisek Vaclav Mica, a composer and music director before going to Vienna. He and Mozart were good friends. Like most composers of the period, he was prolific. Some of his works were mistaken for those of Haydn. He wrote eight string quartets, pretty much in the style pioneered by Haydn. I am familiar with two of these.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major. I have been able to find out when exactly it was composed, but it sounds like sometime between 1775 and 1790. The opening Allegro moderato non tanto sounds like a cross between Haydn and early Mozart, i.e. before K.387. The Andante which follows gives the same impression. Typical Viennese minuet of the sort of Haydn wrote with a nicely contrasting trio. The finale, Rondo allegretto, has good thematic material. This is a decent quartet. It certainly could be recommended to amateurs but the only reason to bring it to the concert hall would be as an example of what contemporaries in Vienna of Haydn and Mozart were producing.

String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major opens in an unusual fashion with an Andante cantabile. This is not an introduction leading to a faster main section. I can think of few of any quartets from this era that begin this way. Second is a rather ordinary Allegro non tanto. Ordinary in the sense that the thematic material is not particularly memorable. A pretty Menuetto follows. The finale, Rondo, allegretto in 6/8 is okay but forgettable. Not as strong as No.2. In my opinion, not even worth the time of amateurs. These quartets are not in the same league as those of Franz Krommer, Paul and Anton Wranitzky, Emmanuel Forster or Leopold Kozeluch. Perhaps the weaker quartets of Dittersdorf.



Ernst Mielck (1877-1899) was born in the Finnish (now Russian) province of Karelia in the town of Viipuni (Vyborg). His father's family were merchants and had emigrated from Germany. After studying piano locally, he continued his studies in Berlin both at the Stern Conservatory with Robert Radecke and privately with Max Bruch. Always in poor health, he died young of tuberculosis but not before composing a symphony, a string quintet and a string quartet all of which were premiered to critical acclaim. Mielck's early death was no doubt responsible for neglect his work has suffered.

His **String Quartet in g minor, Op.1** composed in 1895 when he was but 18 is a polished mature work, which was good enough to receive publication shortly after its premiere. The opening movement, Allegro energico, has a driving theme for its main subject, followed by a sad but lovely, lyrical second melody. The second movement, Allegretto, is a cross between an in-

termezzo and romanza. The a lovely, highly romantic melody in the violin is charmingly accompanied by pizzicati and soft chords in the other voices. The Adagio cantabile which follows is a deeply felt movement based on a Finnish folk melody. The opening to the finale, Vivace, is dominated by a questioning rhythmic motif, which is cleverly expanded in a type of rondo dance. It can be recommended to amateurs and for concert performance.



Darius Milhaud (1892-1974) was born in the French city of Marseilles. He studied composition at the Paris Conservatory with Charles-Marie Widor and became a member of the so called "Les Six", a group of modernist French composer who were active during the first part of the 20th century. During the course of his long career, he frequently traveled abroad, sometimes for pleasure, sometimes from necessity. During the First World

War, Milhaud served as secretary to the French ambassador to Brazil. During the Second World War, he moved to America during the Nazi occupation of France. The sights and sounds of the cultures of he saw always interested him. In his music one often hears the sounds of Brazilian dances and American, but also the "modern" trends of French music during the 1910s and 1920s. At one point he said his goal was to write one more quartet than Beethoven who wrote 17. Milhaud wrote 18. While I have heard several of them, I have only played a few.

He composed the **String Quartet No.1, Op.5** in 1912 at the age of 20. It was dedicated to the memory of Paul Cezanne. The first movement, Rythmique, opens with a simple unison declaration, lively and brisk. and open, occasionally letting up for more lyrical phrases. One can hear echoes of the Debussy quartet. The more lyrical second movement, Intime, contenu, is played muted. The original third movement, Grave, soutenu, is not recorded, but in the revised corrected edition of his quartet Milhaud let it stand, but specified that it was there only "pour mémoire," as a memory. And, in fact, insisted that the revisions showing the redactions also be indicated. The finale, Vif, très rythmé, is dominated by its rhythmic passages although in a center section it strikes a more reflective and graceful mood.

String Quartet No.2, Op.16 came in 1915. It is filled with dissonances and edgy rhythms. Not a work for amateurs. **String Quartet No.3** requires a soprano in the second movement.

String Quartet No.4, Op.46 was composed while Milhaud was working in Rio de Janeiro. It was completed in 1918. Although he would write many pieces inspired by Brazilian music when he returned to Paris, the Fourth Quartet has nothing Brazilian about it. The brief first movement, Vif, opens with a lively theme in F Major which has a bit of the sound of a folk dance. The dissonance one hears is caused by the fact that the second violin and the viola accompany the theme not in F, but in the key of A major. This was a polytonal technique to which Milhaud was particularly partial and he used it through the work. The second movement, Funebre, is a slow, lugubrious funeral march. The final movement, Très animé, is similar in character to the first. Three prominent themes are presented, each with some resemblance to a melody from earlier movement. This was his first venture into polytonality which was to become quite prominent in much of his later work. Good for concert and not beyond fine amateurs. It was dedicated to Schoenberg and is quite dissonant. More avant guard than the works of the dedicatee.

String Quartet No.6, Op.77 from 1925 is a retreat from atonality into polytonality. Dedicated to his friend and fellow composer, Francis Poulenc, it is a short work in three movements. Poulenc did not approve of No.5 and Milhaud seems to have taken this to heart, writing a work, while not exactly devoid of polytonality, writes more traditionally with one voice given the lead to an accompaniment by the others. The opening movement, Sou-

ple et animé is genial and upbeat with a melody first given out by the viola which can be followed. The middle movement, Très lent, also has thematic material which is easily recognizable. The finale, Très vif et rythmé, is upbeat and lively. Could be brought to concert and is accessible to experience amateur players.

String Quartet No.7, Op.87 also from 1925 was dedicated to the Pro Arte Quartet of Brussels. A relatively concise work, Milhaud takes much the same approach as in No.6. It was pointed out to me that Milhaud used seven note themes, seven bar phrases and 7 beat time signatures. The second, Doux et sans hâte and fourth, Vif et gal, are the most transparent at appealing. It can be managed by amateurs and is a good concert choice.

String Quartet No.8, Op.121 came in 1932. It is more substantial and complicated than the preceding two quartets. The opening movement, Vif et souple, is characterized by its repeated irregular meter, 12/8 then 5/8 which creates a disjointed and harsh impression. The middle movement, Lent et grave, is languid without drama or tension. The finale, Très animé, is thrusting and energetic. The cello is given several prominent solos in this quartet. Meant for concert and not home.

String Quartet No.9, Op.140 is from 1935. In four movements, less harsh than No.8. A lot of the music is in thirds and sixths. The calm first movement, Modéré, is so short, many an introduction is longer. The Animé which follows is agitated and grim and not easy to play. Next is a Très lent, the sort of thing during to which you might doze off had eaten a big dinner beforehand. The finale, Décidé, is the best of the four movements, featuring a march-like theme.

Five years passed and in 1940 came **String Quartet No.10, Op.218**. Though not as substantial or complex as the preceding two works, technically this is a much harder work to play and less pleasant to hear. Certainly not for home and unlikely for concert since so few of his are programmed anyway.

String Quartet No.11, Op.232 was composed in 1942 and dedicated to the Budapest String Quartet. Difficult, extremely polytonal, with considerable dissonance. I would not think it a popular concert choice.

String Quartet No.12, Op.252 came in 1945 and was dedicated to the memory of Gabriel Faure, who had died twenty years before, but it was the 100th anniversary of his birth. The work is one of the more frequently, if one can even use that word with regard to Milhaud's quartets, performed because of its slow movement. The opening movement, Modéré, Animé, modéré, features a conversation between the first violin and viola. The middle movement, Lent, has for its main theme a deeply moving melody, which makes a strong impression, not often found in his quartets. The finale, Avec entrain, is exciting and one of the composer's best fast movements. A good choice for concert and manageable by good amateurs.

String Quartet No.13, Op.268, composed in 1946, has been given, though not by the composer, the subtitle, Mexicana, which is the title of the final movement. The opening movement, Très décidé, is jovial and prominence of intermittent pizzicato chords creates the impression of a guitar. The middle movement, Barcarolle, is as one might expect from the title, calm and sedate. The finale, Mexicana, is full of dance rhythms perhaps inspired by mariachi players. This neo-classical work is one of his most accessible, a good choice for concert, but not easy for amateurs.

String Quartet Nos.14 and 15 were meant to be played together at the same time to create a kind of octet. I have heard this once, by two fine professional quartets and I can unequivocally say that it is not an experience I would want to repeat nor do I think anyone else would. Harsh, unpleasant, dissonant. Consult your thesaurus for synonyms.

String Quartet No.16, Op.303 was composed in 1950 on the 25th anniversary of his marriage. In four movement, Tendre, Vif, Doux et calme, Animé. The titles describe the music which is mostly lyrical. Okay for concert and experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.17 is perhaps the most complex and elaborate of the series. Hard to make any sense of.

String Quartet No.18 came the following year in 1951 and was dedicated to the memory of his parents who had died during the Nazi occupation of France. It is a sad, downtrodden work with little, in my opinion, to recommend it for concert or home.



Franz Mittler (1893-1970) was born in Vienna. As a boy he was given violin and piano lessons. At the Vienna Conservatory, he studied theory with Joseph Labor and composition with Richard Heuberger. During the 1920's, he became one of the most sought after lieder accompanists. He also made a name for himself as a chamber music pianist, joining forces with such groups as the world famous Rosé String Quartet. Of Jewish extraction,

Mittler left Austria for New York in 1938 when the Nazis seized power. In the United States, Mittler enjoyed a varied career, performing chamber music on the radio, teaching, writing for Hollywood and television. Eventually, he returned to Europe and spent his final years teaching at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. He composed three string quartets which show that he had rejected the atonalism Schoenberg and the Second Vienna School. Instead, his work takes Brahms as a starting point and builds on it, extending the limits of tonality.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major dates from 1909 and is written in a late Romantic, post Brahmsian idiom. Mittler was all of sixteen years old. Nonetheless, it is an astoundingly mature work. The main theme to the opening Allegro is genial, broad and gentle. This is followed by a slightly more diffident melody which slowly turns into an intermezzo. The second movement, Andante, gives the impression of beginning in mid-phrase with a lovely, naive Schumannesque theme. The second subject, first introduced by the cello, has a slinky, cabaret quality, but quickly becomes quite intense, building to a powerful dramatic climax. A Scherzo, Allegro moderato, comes next. Neo-Haydn-esque, it starts off as if it's to be a fugue, but no such thing happens. Instead, it bubbles along, suddenly producing a marvelous aria section before leading to an oriental-sounding trio, which provides a stunning contrast. The finale, Allegro, begins with a sad, pleading theme, reminiscent of Schubert. Again, the second subject, tonally, moves into oriental terrain, while a third melody, even sadder than the first and sounding like an eastern European Jewish plaint, follows. A first rate work, good choice for concert and warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in e minor was composed between 1910-1911. Also written in a Post-Brahmsian, late Romantic style, but whereas String Quartet No.1 is mostly genial and gentle, String Quartet No.2 is more dramatic and at times almost violently stormy. The first movement, Allegro moderato, is a prime example of this as it dramatically explodes from its opening bars like a sudden thunder burst. Just as suddenly, the music turns quiet with remnants of the storm eventually driven away by a carefree Viennese dance. But then the sky clouds over and a dark ominous progression is heard which leads to yet another storm. The main theme of the massive Adagio which follows has a hymn-like quality. It is calm and dignified. Though not so marked, the movement is a theme and set of variations. Each of the variations has a different mood, the blood of Vienna is clearly infused in several. Next comes an Allegretto moderato, which by comparison to the second movement is quite concise. It is in the nature of a teasing intermezzo. The opening section of the finale, Presto, bursts forth with tremendous energy. The main theme is not only powerful but possesses tremendous forward drive. A second section, in a lighter mood, has the quality of steeple chase. The two sections jostle back and forth throughout creating a tremendous sense of excitement. Excellent choice for concert and amateurs.

String Quartet No 3 in d minor dates from 1918. It is subtitled *Aus der Wanderzeit* (from the wandering time) and is a eulogy for the Old Austria of the fin d'siecle Habsburg Empire of Mittler's youth, which by 1918 been destroyed during the First World War. The Quartet was meant to portray the break up of the Empire as well as areas which Mittler himself had visited. The big opening movement, entitled *Wollynien* (English *Volhynia*), refers to a German-Jewish enclave in the eastern part of the Empire, now part of Ukraine. Although discordant and in at times violent, this is not music of the Shtetl, though a few vague references can be heard. The second movement is a Scherzo, said to be Serbian. It begins in an typical Viennese fashion but soon a grotesque and angular Serbian dance takes center stage. The third movement, an Andante, is entitled *Steiermark*, the Austrian province of Styria. It the music is soft and rather romantic. The finale, *Rhapsodia ungherese* (Hungarian Rhapsody), opens in fits and starts with a dramatic introduction after which a slow and forlorn melody, clearly Hungarian, makes its appearance. Densely scored and powerful, the music limps along until it is interrupted by the violent opening chords which lead to an energetic fugue, followed by an ultra dramatic climax. Pizzicato deftly imitates the Hungarian cembalo. It is all incredibly well conceived. A sudden silence augurs a change of mood in which a wild dances makes a mad rush to the exciting coda. This is a masterwork, belonging in the repertoire but not beyond experienced amateurs.



Ernest Moeran (1894-1950) was born in Heston near London. Shortly after his birth, the family moved to the remote Norfolk Fen Country. As a child he learned to play the violin and piano. He subsequently enrolled at the Royal College of Music and studied composition with Charles Villiers Stanford. He fought in World War One and received a severe head injury, with shrapnel embedded too close to the brain for removal.

He underwent what would now be considered primitive head surgery which involved the fitting of a metal plate into the skull. Unsurprisingly this was to affect him for the rest of his life. After discharge, in 1920 he continued his studies the Royal College, staying there under John Ireland. It was from Ireland that Moeran was came to be heavily influenced by English folk-song and thus belongs to the lyrical tradition.

String Quartet No.1 in a minor dates from the end 1921 a short time after he finished his studies. It was hailed as a highly accomplished work, received good reviews and considerable praise and then sadly forgotten. The opening movement, Allegro, energetic and full of lovely melodies, conjures up broad panoramas of the countryside. The following Andante con moto is quieter and basically autumnal in mood. The closing Rondo is restless, alternating between nervous excitement and reflective pensiveness. A good but not great work, still strong enough for concert and recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major dates from 1923. The manuscript found among the composer's papers by his widow after his death. The opening movement, Allegro moderato *ma ben animato*, begins with a first violin theme of pastoral suggestion, then a transitional passage of greater range and excitement, followed by the gentle second subject. The opening phrase of the viola, in the second movement, Lento. *Vivace. Allegretto. Andante. Allegro vivace* is at first answered strongly by the other instruments. There follows the introduction to a folk song-like theme in the first violin eventually leading to the final section, *Vivace*. This is opened by the rhythmic repetition of a single note by the muted second violin. A thematic fragment is heard from the muted first violin, imitated by the viola before the unmuted cello proposes a theme, echoed by viola and second violin in turn, in the compound rhythm of the first movement. This is fol-

lowed by the first violin with its own thematic material. There is a change of key from E minor to E major and a change of pace and rhythm, marked *Allegretto*, moving, with other changes of tonality, to a muted *Andante*. More complicated than No.1 and not as rewarding, but perhaps a concert performance.



Bernhard Molique (1802-1869) was born in the German city of Nuremberg. After studying with his father, Molique took lessons from Louis Spohr and Pietro Rovelli. After pursuing a career as a touring virtuoso for several years, Molique accepted the position of Music Director to the Royal Court in Stuttgart. He also taught for several years in London at the Royal Academy of Music. As a composer, he was largely self taught. His

music shows the influence of Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Spohr. Remembered for his violin concertos, he wrote a considerable amount of chamber music including 8 string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.16 was composed around 1830. The opening *Allegro* is pleasant but unremarkable. The *Menuetto* which comes next is playful and sounds something like what Haydn might have written had he been alive then. The third movement, *Andante non troppo*, features a lovely melody first given out by the cello. A good movement. The finale, *Rondo vivace*, in the expected 6/8 is playful but not particularly exciting. He wrote better quartets than this, not for concert or home.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor, Op.17 might be considered a tribute to undoubted model, Beethoven. From the opening c minor chords of the first movement, *Allegro*. As the movement progresses, one hears echoes of Op.18 No.4. The second Movement, *Menuetto*, is fresh, original sounding, yet Beethovenian. The third movement *Andante*, is delicate and expressive, sounding of a simple folk melody. The finale, is bumpy and full of dramatic shifts and pauses, interesting but not overly thrilling. I can recommend it to amateurs but not for concert.

String Quartet No.3 in F Major, Op.18 No.1 is the first of a set of three which he completed in 1834. Perhaps it is only coincidental that Beethoven's Op.18 No.1 is also in F Major, yet the opening *Allegro* with its powerful unison figure is clearly Beethovenian. Yet despite this, the music does not sound much like him, except in the thrusting quality of its yearning theme. A lovely *Andante* follows in which a compelling conversation between the first violin and cello. Soon the other join in the development. The next movement, though marked *Minuetto*, is in actuality a scherzo. The bumptious rhythm clearly recalls Beethoven's Op.18, which in turn were indebted to Haydn for this format. The main theme of the trio section as presented by the three upper voices is calmer, yet underneath, the cello quietly hammers away with a rhythmic figure from the scherzo. Again, there are echoes of Beethoven. The whirling finale, *Vivace*, has a certain Mendelssohn elegance to it, full of bustle and good spirits. A cut above the first two quartets. Strong enough for concert and warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in a minor, Op.18 No.2 is the second of the set. The opening *Allegro* begins with a flowing melody which quickly becomes a dramatic dialogue between the first violin and cello. The thematic material alternates between a carefree and naïve mood to episodes of turbulence. A reflective and highly ornamented *Andante* comes next. Here, Molique pays close attention to the construction and inner exchanges between the voices. The third movement, though marked *Menuetto*, is actually a somewhat nervous Mendelssohnian scherzo. The hard driving finale, *Vivace*, bursts forth with tremendous forward energy and generates considerable excitement. Not a bad choice for concert where an early Romantic era work is desired. Recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.5 in E flat major, Op. 18, No. 3 is the final quartet of the set and begins with an upbeat *Allegro*. Next comes a pretty *Andante*, based on a folk tune. Third is a *Menuetto*, nice but nothing special. The finale, *Presto*, is full of good spirits but not overly exciting. I cannot recommend it for concert, although amateurs might like it.

String Quartet No.6 in f minor, Op.28 dates from the mid 1840's. The opening *Allegro* has yearning themes which keep one's attention. A pleasant but basically ordinary *Andante* follows. Third is a *Scherzo* which keeps one's attention and with a lovely, contrasting trio. This is better than the preceding two movements. The finale, *Rondo*, moves along but the thematic material is just average, not all that strong. Skip concert performance but again amateurs might like it.

String Quartet No.7 in B flat Major, Op.42 dates from 1851 at which time he was living in London. It is dedicated to two of his friends, amateur enthusiasts. The work is light-hearted and shows the influence of one of his favorite composers, Mendelssohn. The opening *Allegro vivace* begins in a fashion that is obviously modeled on Mendelssohn's Op.44 No.2 not only in its melodies, but also in its use of rhythm and division of thematic material. However, with the introduction of subsidiary themes, the similarity disappears. The second movement, *Menuetto*, is for all intents and purposes a scherzo, melancholy in mood but as it goes along it begins to resemble one of Mendelssohn's elves' dances. A tranquil *Andante* with telling use of *pizzicato* resembles a serenade and serves as the third movement. The finale is a cheerful and lively *Rondo*. Which recalls Beethoven's Op.18 No.1. Good though not great, still strong enough for concert and home.

String Quartet No.8 in A Major, Op.44 dates from 1852 at which time he was living in London. It was dedicated to a Russian nobleman and keen amateur violinist. It is not an accident that the quartet shows the influence Felix Mendelssohn, not only because Mendelssohn's music was the popular in England during this period, but also because Mendelssohn was one of Molique's favorite composers. Even the opus number 44 was a conscious choice on the part of Molique as tribute to Mendelssohn's Op.44 quartets. The opening theme to the first movement, *Allegro*, introduced by the first violin is a gripping melody of pathos. It is a theme which reappears, albeit, in somewhat different guises in following movements. The tribute to Mendelssohn is further evidenced by the choice of title of the second movement, *Intermezzo poco vivace*, not *Menuetto*, a title he used elsewhere. It is something Mendelssohn himself could have written, a rather fleet elves dance. The gorgeous *Adagio* which comes next might be viewed as a very lengthy introduction to the light-hearted finale, a buoyant *Rondo*, though not quite up to the first three movements, this is quite a good quartet, suitable for concert and home.



Stanisław Moniuszko (1819-1872) was born into a family of Polish landowners in Ubiel, not far from Minsk in what was then Russian Poland, now Belarus. When he was 9, his family moved to Warsaw where he began piano lessons. Both his talent and interest justified sending him to Berlin to continue his studies. While in Berlin, he had an unexpected early success when he set three songs to the words of the Polish national poet, Adam Mickiewicz. Moniuszko was to become the foremost 19th century composer of Polish song. The source of his melodies and rhythmic patterns can usually be found in Polish folkdances such as the polonaise, mazurka, *krajowiak*, *kujawiak* and *oberek*. The bulk of his oeuvre consists of operas, operettas, and secular and sacred songs. Among his instrumental works are two string quartets which date from 1840 toward the end of his time in Berlin.

The opening theme to the first movement, *Allegro agitato*, of **String Quartet No.1 in d minor** is a mildly agitated, a gracious

second theme, sounding a bit like Schubert, follows. The second movement, Andantino, has a lovely, naïve melody, again reminiscent of early Schubert. Dramatic tension is added during an operatic dialogue between the first violin and cello. In the original-sounding Scherzo, the main theme is a lilting and very danceable, attractive Polish mazurka. The finale, Allegro assai, is subtitled, *Un ballo compestre e sue conseguenze*. It begins with a traditional Polish dance, a Hajduk or Haiduk. Although the Hajduks of Polish history were rather rough and romantic characters with shaved heads and long pigtailed a la Genghis Khan, what we hear at first is not the rustic revelry of rude mercenary brigands but rather a kind of formal French musette. The musette effect comes from the bagpipe drone in the viola and cello. The rousing middle section is more in keeping with the title. The main theme then returns, but this time in a foot-stomping, thigh-slapping rendition. This quartet's melodies are fresh and attractive. It would make a good work for professional groups requiring a shorter work as a substitute for Mozart or Haydn with a Polish flavor. Amateurs will certainly enjoy playing it.

In the opening theme to the first movement, Allegro moderato to **String Quartet No.2 in F Major**, the influence of both Beethoven and particularly of Schubert can be heard. The main theme is lyrical with some lovely chromatic passages, while a second theme is more assertive and dramatic. The second movement, Andante, is in the form of an elegy. It begins with a funereal theme of Beethovenian pathos which at times is punctuated by sudden bursts of anger. The scherzo, which follows, is entitled *Baccanale monacale*, and is a light, happy affair. The trio is a rustic fiddler's dance. The short airy finale, Allegro, is a whirling affair is over almost before it begins. This is also a good work although it does not make as strong an impression as No.1. Certainly it can be recommended to amateurs as it is not hard to play.



Alexander Mosolov (1900-1973) was born in Kiev but his family moved to Moscow when he was a boy, and he grew up there, studying piano and composition at the Moscow Conservatory with Reinhold Gliere and Nicolai Myaskovsky. He was attracted to the so-called Russian Futurist Movement which sought new ways to express melodic and harmonic material. His early works caused him to fall afoul of the Stalinist government and he was imprisoned in the Gulag for several months. After his release, he concentrated on setting the folk music of Kirgizstan and Turkmenistan into traditional orchestral forms. His compositions from this point on were more conservative as he did not wish to provoke further conflict with the authorities. He composed in most genres and penned at least four string quartets. I am only familiar with the first two.

String Quartet No.1, Op.24 was composed in 1926, the year after he graduated from Moscow Conservatory. The opening Andante agitato begins in a mysterious and somewhat threatening fashion. A recurring ostinato rhythm in the cello sets the mood. There follows a thrusting march like theme before the music sinks back into a shrouded atmosphere. Throughout the rest of the movement these brief and powerful storm bursts break through the fog of the Andante with constant tempo changes. The second movement, Adagio, also marked *Tempo di gavotta*, is a rather slow dance followed by a quicker section before a *Largo funebre*. Next comes a Scherzo which is nervous and even frenetic. The finale, Allegro risoluto, begins wildly but like passengers getting out of a car which has suddenly careened off the road, the music slows and is wobbly. Gradually the tempo picks up again and a march episode follows. Constant mood and tempo changes punctuate the movement. This quartet features a lot of harsh dissonances although there are several interesting parts to it. It might be brought into concert as an example of Russian Futurism before Stalin cracked down on artists and musicians. Not for amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 On Patriotic Themes and Partisan Songs of 1812 dates from 1942 not long after his release from prison but while he was still exiled from the major cities of the USSR. Like all of his work from the mid-1930s forward, it's written in a much more conservative, i.e. more 'official style, according to Soviet-era cultural stricture. As such this is a far more approachable work which would do well in concert and could be recommended to experienced amateurs.



Mihály Mosonyi (1815-1870), who until he changed his name in 1859, was known as Michael Brand. Born in the Austro-Hungarian town of Frauenkirchen (Boldogaszonyfalva), he studied piano and composition with unknowns and learned what he did from studying the Viennese Classics along with textbooks by Reicha and Hummel. For the first part of his life, he lived on rural estates as a music teacher, pretty much isolated and as such musically speaking was behind the times. He did not become aware of developments by Schumann and Mendelssohn until at least 1850. Up until 1859, he wrote in the German Romantic style. After that time he wrote Hungarian Romantic music. He is thought to have written seven string quartets all of them composed between 1835 and 1845. Therefore, if you are expecting to find Hungarian flavored quartets, you will be disappointed, since he was still writing in the Viennese classical style and signing himself Michael Brand.

String Quartet No.1 in D Major opens with a winning theme in the first movement, Allegro. It moves along nicely from start to finish. The second movement, Adagio, has a religious tinge to it. It could have been written by Haydn, so for 1840 it was not exactly au courant, nonetheless, it was pleasant and well-written. The Scherzo which comes third is also Haydnesque. Not at all bad. The finale, Allegro vivace in 6/8, is a nice romp. There is nothing wrong with this quartet and I can warmly recommend it to amateurs but it cannot go into the concert hall because it was fifty years behind the time and while this perhaps could be forgiven if the composer was actually a Hungarian, as the product of an ethnic German composer, it cannot be considered an example of what Hungarian composers were doing in the 1840s.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor begins with a fetching Allegro moderato. He creates drama and there is good use of the cello. The Adagio which comes next sounds very close to a quote from an earlier composer, Haydn? Beethoven?, but nicely done. Menuet, allegro vivo, a good movement, but again the spirit of Haydn is hovering over the music rather heavily. The finale, Allegro moderato, is decent if unremarkable. Okay for amateurs.

String Quartet No.5 in f minor opens with an attractive Allegro con brio followed by Adagio con variazione. Here there is a touch of real originality with the opening theme being given out by the cello alone by pizzicato on its lower strings. The variations are interesting. The Scherzo, allegro presto is full of excitement. This is an impressive movement. The finale, Allegro moderato, has a yearning melody for its main theme which is expertly handled. Mosonyi could write well. He is not merely imitating Haydn. These quartets are the equal of those by several composers from more or less the same period who could not quite move beyond the late Viennese Classical and early Romantic eras.

What can I possibly write about **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** that has not already been written many times elsewhere. His last 10 quartets, i.e. from K.387 through K.590, are mandatory for any quartet player. A sin not to play them. To paraphrase Samuel Johnson, the famous lexicographer, raconteur, author and playwright when you are tired of Mozart, you are tired of music. This is not to say that all you should play is Mozart. Far from it, and certainly that is the whole purpose of this Guide. It assumes you have played and know your Mozart.



Johanna Muller-Hermann (1878-1941) was born in Vienna. Although she was given music lessons early on, she was not allowed to pursue a career as a musician. It was only after she married that she was able to do so. She was quite fortunate in being able to study with some of the best teachers then living in Vienna, including Josef Labor, Guido Adler, Josef Bohuslav Föerster and Alexander Zemlinsky.

Her **String Quartet in E flat Major, Op.6** appeared in 1912. Of these composers, her quartet sounds the most like early Zemlinsky though somewhat more advanced tonally. There are also vague echoes of Föerster. The opening movement, Moderato, begins with a theme which, at least for the first few bars, sounds like a quote but I could not place it, Suk, Novak, Zemlinsky??. Anyway it is written in a post Brahmsian tonal style. The main theme is quite attractive but soon she reaches for the limits of traditional tonality and then adding some dissonances. The music veers back and forth teasing between lovely themes which then get smeared with occasional dissonances. The second movement, Allegro vivace, is a muscular scherzo. The rhythm is more prominent than any thematic material. Adagio con espressione which comes next has a searching mood, brooding and unpleasant. The finale, Allegro con spirit, has a discernable theme which is nervous, attention grabbing. The development is also quite good as is the second theme. This quartet is strong enough for concert performance but only for best and most experienced amateurs.



Within Russia, **Nikolai Myaskovsky** (sometimes Miaskovsky 1881-1950) and his music are fairly well-known. But outside of Russia, unlike the music of Shostakovich, his music is rarely heard and he is basically unknown. To me this is surprising and unfair because I think his music is the equal of Shostakovich. He has to be one of the most underrated composers of the 20th century.

Most who come to his music for the first time are amazed that it is not better known. He wrote some 27 symphonies and 13 string quartets. Myaskovsky was born in Congress (i.e. Russian) Poland near Warsaw, where his father, a military engineer, was then serving. He took piano and violin lessons as a boy but followed in his father's footsteps, entering the military academy and graduating as an engineer. When he was posted to Moscow, he studied composition with Reinhold Gliere. Upon transfer to St. Petersburg, he finally decided to become a composer and entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov and Liadov. It was there he met Prokofiev with whom he became close friends. He served in WWI and was severely wounded on the Austrian front. After the war, he taught for most of his life at the Moscow Conservatory. Among his many students were Kabalevsky, Khachaturian, Shebalin and Shchedrin. Certainly his thirteen string quartets are. These are all works which deserve concert performance, some belong in the standard repertoire and most can be managed by amateur players.

String Quartet No.1 in a minor, Op.33 No.1 although it carries the moniker of No.1, it is not Myaskovsky's first string quartet. Nos.3, 4 and 10 were all composed before No.1, roughly between 1907 and 1911. No.1, which is in actuality his fourth quartet, dates from 1929. Tonally speaking, this quartet and No.2 are the most modern-sounding and in some ways the most astringent. The main theme to the opening movement, Poco rubato ed agitato, is highly chromatic and enigmatic. It is followed by a kind of lullaby subject expressed in the pentatonic scale. The second movement, Allegro tenebroso, is a kind of modern scherzo combining a whirling motif with a mechanical like quality produced by its rhythm. The following Andante sostenuto is quite daring in that it clearly shows the influence of jazz and the blues--hardly

extraordinary for the times in the West, but in the Soviet Union, jazz and the blues were anathema. Shostakovich, during this period, was forced to publicly apologize for producing an arrangement of Tea for Two. The finale, Assai allegro, features a lopsided rhythmic, thrusting dance which moves forward by lurches.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor, Op.33 No.2 as noted above was not actually Myaskovsky's second quartet. It is in actuality his fifth quartet and dates from 1930. Tonally speaking, this quartet and No.1 are the most modern-sounding and in some ways the most astringent. The opening to the first movement, Allegro pesante, begins disjointedly with a series of thrusting chords followed by soft pizzicati. The main theme is a restless, searching chromatic subject. The middle movement, Andante, is darkly introspective tinged with a strong sense of sadness. Only in the finale, Vivace, is the heavy cloud lifted by a bright but highly nervous theme which races along frantically. A more lyrical second theme provides fine contrast.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.33 No.3 is in two movements and was composed in 1910 while Myaskovsky was still at the Petersburg Conservatory. Given that it appeared before the beginning of the Russian Revolution, it is in part strikingly modern though clearly building on existing traditions. The dark, brooding Lento introduction of the first movements leads to the main section, Allegro ma non troppo malinconico, which is restless. The music shifts from harsh angularity to lyricism and back again, always with a persistent undercurrent of unrest. The second movement is Theme and set of 8 variations. Myaskovsky was not fond of Liadov, his composition professor. Liadov was known to dislike the music of Edvard Grieg and this almost certainly led to Myaskovsky selecting Grieg's Op.66 Cradle Song as the subject for his theme. The variations which follow display an impressive command of technique and fertility of invention.

String Quartet No.4 in f minor, Op.33 No.4 was composed between 1909-1910 two years before Myaskovsky graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory. The Quartet begins with a slow, reflective Andante introduction, which leads to a passionate Allegro, the second theme is more quiet. Next comes an Allegro risoluto, which is in three sections. The outer sections are characterized by vigorous rhythmic themes while the middle section is a lyrical and dance-like. The Andante which follows is broad and fluid, while a second theme is based on Russian folk melody. In the energetic finale, Allegro molto, the composer uses a transparent harmony and is concerned with the interchange of thematic material between the four voices

String Quartet No.5 in e minor, Op.47 was composed in 1938 and was dedicated to his friend Vissarion Shebalin, who became a well-known composer, at least inside of the Soviet Union. The opening movement, Allegro tranquillo, has for its main theme, a lovely but sad Russian melody. The second subject is just as ingratiating. The second movement, Molto vivo, bursts forth with an exciting, nervous scherzo, full of wild chromatic scale passages. Eventually, a gorgeous second theme, which recalls Borodin, is interspersed. A slow movement, Andantino semplice, has a simple melody for the main theme. However, it is written on a large scale and moves leisurely across a wide musical landscape. The finale, Allegro molto e con brio, is dominated by a pulsating rhythm which creates a mood of dynamism.

String Quartet No.6 in g minor, Op.49 was composed during 1939-1940. The work is characterized by its clarity of expression and plasticity of musical ideas. The opening movement, Moderato con anima, is interesting in that the main theme gives birth to the others. They grow organically out of the first theme. The use of polyphone and along with the brilliant energy are typically Russian. The second movement, Allegro vivo e giocoso, is subtitled Burlesca. It is a tiny scherzo, the theme is a puppet-like march which is whimsically embroidered in the accompanying figures. The contrasting trio section is broad and lyrical. A slow movement, marked Andante lugubre, follows. Again there is a

subtitle--Malinconia. The music is both lugubrious and emotionally powerful. The finale, *Allegro energico e con fuoco*, combines thrusting rhythmic themes with more lyrical episodes, largely written in 3-3-2 time, typical of Russian folk melodies.

String Quartet No.7 in F Major, Op.55 dates from 1941. The opening movement, a lyrical *Andantino*, is quiet and somewhat leisurely in character. The second movement, *Vivace e fantastico*, is wild and racing, almost dervish-like, there is no place to rest until the middle section which is more reflective. Next comes an *Andante con moto*, has the flair of the Russian orient. The composer himself stated he used a melody from a Caucasian folk tune. The finale, *Vivacissimo* with its energetic main theme and lively second subject makes a suitable conclusion.

String Quartet No.8 in f# minor, Op.59 was composed in 1942 at the height of the Second World War and is in memory of his friend Z. P. Feldman. It is certainly one of his finest. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins sadly with the viola singing a melancholy melody. It is clearly an elegy, charged with sorrowful emotion and pain. However, there is a restraint, which does not allow the emotion to get out of hand, and this creates a crystalline clarity. In the *Adagio* which follows, the beautiful main theme stands as a marvelous panoramic tonal tribute to his dead friend. The powerful finale, *Allegro drammatico*, draws on Russian folk melody for its themes. The first reflects the hectic, chaotic nature of modern life, while the second is a calmer, affectionate and pastoral tune.

String Quartet No.9 in d minor, Op.62 was composed in 1943 and was dedicated to "the glorious 20th anniversary of the Beethoven String Quartet", which was at the time the most famous string quartet in the Soviet Union. The opening movement, *Allegro inquieto*, is restless and somewhat nervous. The excited main theme and the more lyrical second theme can be traced to folk melody though written here on an epic scale. The second movement is actually two movements in one, combining the functions of a slow movement and a scherzo. It begins with a lyrical and lilting *Andante*, leisurely proceeding but then it morphs into the second part, *Allegro misterioso*, a soaring, magical scherzo. The brilliant, orchestral finale, *Allegro con brio*, without doubt is meant as a solemn glorification as the opening theme recalls the Russian orthodox glorifying chant "Many Years". The second theme is based on a Russian military march from the First World War.

String Quartet No.10 in F Major, Op.67 No.1 began as an early work and was completed in 1907. However, Myaskovsky returned to it in 1943 and decided, as he put it, "to clean it up." It is the only one of his early quartets which he radically revised. The opening movement, *Allegro non troppo*, is characterized by energetic clearly set out melodic material. The second movement, *Vivo scherzando*, is an upbeat, genial scherzo with playful rhythms and a lyrical trio section. Next comes an *Andante con moto lagrabile*, it is lyrical and somewhat introspective. The finale, *Allegro molto e con brio* is a hard-driving, vigorous affair full of bright melodies and swaths of almost orchestral sound.

String Quartet No.11 in E flat Major, Op.67 No.2 is subtitle *d Reminiscences*, which is a reference to the composer's early piano miniatures of 1906-07 and lyrical vocal works of the 1930's, the melodies to which he revisits. It was completed in 1945. The unhurried first movement, *Allegro tranquillo*, sets the pace for the whole work. The music is elegant, transparent, and light. The second movement, *Andante con moto*, is clearly reminiscence of an earlier vocal work. It is a quote from his 1936 song cycle *Lermontov*. It is the form of a ballad, lovely and lyrical, yet unexpectedly interrupted by an emotional outburst in the middle. The third movement, *Allegretto penseroso*, is a slow, waltz. The smooth spinning of the repeated waltz figure, every time gaining new details, wraps a laconic rondo form in a kind of set of variations. The finale, *Allegro non troppo, giocoso a festivo*, is a lively dance.

String Quartet No.12 in G Major, Op.77 was dedicated to his friend and former student Dmitri Kabalevsky, It was composed in 1947 and is certainly one of his most substantial quartets, written on a large scale. The first movement begins with a slow *Andante* introduction which leads to the main part of the movement, an *Allegro moderato*. The thematic material is related to the prototypes of earlier of Russian epic folk music and in parts has an archaic quality. The second movement, *Allegro fantastico*, is an unusual quick scherzo, somewhat mysterious, with a more melodious slower trio section sandwiched between the quicker outer parts. In the third movement, *Andante con espressione*, we hear the themes from the opening movement presented as a four part fugue. The finale, *Allegro moderato*, opens jovially with definite folkloric peasant dance features which are often interrupted by more serious and severe thematic episodes.

String Quartet No.13 in a minor, Op.86 was composed in 1949 at a time when the composer clearly new he was dying and hence it is in a way his musical testament. As one critic put it, "From the opening bars of the quartet and over the pulsing 8th notes in the viola and second violin, the cello brings forth a rising melody--it is like a prayer, humble and resigned, yet fervent. There is no mistaking that this is a masterpiece." The lovely cello melody of opening movement, *Moderato*, in many ways sets the tone for the entire work. There is passion and yet a valedictory mood of leave taking. It is very Russian in its romanticism. The second subject is a jaunty, angular dance-like tune which brightens the heavy mood of the opening. A third more reflective theme follows. The second movement, *Presto fantastico*, is a kind of disjointed scherzo in three parts. In the first section, the melody swirls about to endlessly varying rhythmical combinations. This is followed an episode in which the violin and then the cello launch into a jerky melody, over an insistent 8th note accompaniment in the other voices. This is followed by a mysterious, delicate interlude. Next comes a slower movement, *Andante con moto*, which is in the form of an updated, simple romance, quiet and peaceful. From its opening measures, the finale, *Molto vivo, energico*, the main theme, which is dominated by its resolute and impulsive rhythm, burst forth. Rather than a typical development, Myaskovsky forces this theme to alternative with a mellow and more lyrical section. A very fine work.



Eduard Nápravník (1839-1916) was born in Bohemian town of Beisch (now Býšť), in what was then the Habsburg Empire. He learned to play the organ at his local church and then entered the Prague Organ School after which he obtained an appointment to serve as conductor of the famous private orchestra of Prince Yusupov in St. Petersburg. Thereafter he served as conductor of the Mariinsky Theatre and later several Imperial Theaters. He became an influential figure in Russian musical life and was even mentioned in Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* as a famous conductor. He premiered several of Tchaikovsky's works and assisted the composer in tightening up certain scores. He wrote in most genres but today is remembered for his most successful opera, *Dubrovsky*. He did not neglect chamber music writing three string quartets, a string quintet, two piano trios, a piano quartet and several instrumental works.

String Quartet No.1 in E Major, Op.16 was published in 1882 but appears to have been composed a decade earlier. While none of his quartets gained any traction outside of Russia, this one was at least heard in Germany and the Czech lands because of its second movement, sometimes performed by itself. The opening movement, *Allegro risoluto*, is rather orchestral in nature with a lot of unisono playing. The main theme is hard to follow. The second movement, *Allegretto vivace*, Nápravník himself subtitled *Serenata*, It makes clever use of pizzicato and has a

wonderfully contrasting slower section. A lovely *Larghetto* serves as the third movement. The main subject to the finale, *Allegro vivace*, could be better and the composers seems to be depending on showy effects rather than his thematic material. I can not recommend this work for concert but I can to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.28 dates from 1890. It is quite lengthy, but certainly strong enough to be brought into the concert hall. This is a work with many original ideas, nicely executed and which sound quite good. The first movement, *Allegro*, is genial and appealing. The second movement, *Vivace*, is an magnificent polka with several original episodes. The vocal quality of the melodies of the *Larghetto* which comes next shows the composer's gift for melody and that he is an experienced composer for opera. The finale, *Allegro con moto* is filled with lively dance-like themes. This will make a strong impression if performed in concert and is warmly recommended to amateurs.

Ten years passed between the time *Nápravník* wrote his Second Quartet and **String Quartet No.3 in C Major, Op.65**. It was completed in 1900 and dedicated to the Bohemian String Quartet one of the most famous string quartet ensembles then performing before the public. They took it on tour with them and performed it to acclaim. Like so many other works from this period, it disappeared after the First World War. The buoyant, powerful opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, is richly scored and has a rather orchestral quality. It is restless and full of energy. The second movement, *Allegretto giocoso*, seems misnomered. It has the feel of an exotic, Oriental intermezzo. In third place is a dark hued *Adagio*, tinged ever so slightly with a touch of sadness. The finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, also approaching the orchestral in the volume of sound, is a robust, triumphant march. It would be welcome in concert and can be recommended to amateurs.



Pietro Nardini (1722-1793) was born in the Italian town of Fibiana. He studied the violin with the famous virtuoso and teacher Giuseppe Tartini after which he obtained various positions in southern Germany but eventually returning to Italy to serve as Music Director for the Grand Duke of Tuscany in Florence. Most of his compositions were for the violin. However, he did write at least eight string quartets. The manuscripts of six can be found in the library of the Conservatory of Florence, the other two in Genoa. Most scholars believe that Nardini did not write these works before 1765, yet stylistically they seem to hark back to the Italian baroque era and do not seem in any way influenced by the works of the Stamitzes or Mannheim school, nor those of Haydn and Boccherini. One can almost hear Vivaldi and his contemporaries. The **Six Florentine Quartets** were published around 1767 and they do show an evolutionary development with the later quartets making greater use of the lower voices than the earlier works. Certainly not for concert, except maybe for historical purposes. For home for those who like the baroque.

Ernst Naumann (1832-1910) was born in the German town of Freiberg in Saxony. He studied music at the Leipzig Conservatory with Moritz Hauptmann and Ernst Friedrich Richter and made his name primarily as an organist, editor and conductor. He served as Kapellmeister of Jena from 1860 until his death fifty years later. His compositions were not numerous and a large part of them are chamber music, including a string quartet.

String Quartet in g minor, Op.9 dates from 1877. The works opens with a sweet, lengthy, perhaps overly long, *Andante con moto* introduction which leads to an effective march-like *Allegro*. The second movement, *Allegro agitato*, serves as the scherzo, and as the title suggests, is agitated, rather riveting. Unfortunately, the trio section is rather ordinary and unmemorable. Next is a Mendelssohnian Song without words, *Lento assai e molto cantabile*. The finale, *Risoluto ma non troppo*, is powerful and plays well.

Not at all a bad work but the first and last movements would have to be seriously shortened given their thematic material. Not good enough for the concert hall, but okay for amateurs.

Karl Nawratil (1836-1914) was born in Vienna where he lived his entire life. He is sometimes confused with the Czech composer known as Karel Nawratil (1867-1936) Karl Nawratil studied law and music in Vienna, the latter with the famous Beethoven scholar Gustav Nottebohm. He pursued a dual career as a civil servant in the Imperial Austrian Service and also as a composer and teacher at the University of Vienna. Among his students were Eduard Schutt, Walter Rabl and Anton Webern. He was a close friend of Brahms who entrusted him with the manuscript of his German Requiem. I am not familiar with his first string quartet.

The **String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.21** was published in 1898 but was composed a decade earlier. It is in four movements. The first movement, *Allegro molto moderato*, has for its main theme a rather unusual subject by virtue of the rhythmic figure which dominates it. The second movement, *Tempo di Menuetto*, has a touch of the exotic orient with a charming, contrasting trio section. A warm and deeply felt *Andante molto moderato* comes next. The work is topped off by an exciting finale, *Allegro vivace*. An occasional concert performance would not be amiss. Warmly recommended to amateurs.



Joachim Bruun de Neergaard (1877-1920) was born in Stubberrup, a small village in the east-central part of Jutland. He came from scions of an aristocratic family with long service to the Danish government and as such was eventually sent to take a law degree which he finished in 1901. However, Neergaard's true love was music and not the law. He had studied piano from the time of his youth and wished to pursue a career in music. To this end, he took advanced piano studies while at the same time studying theory and composition. Neergaard, whose life was relatively short, was not a prolific composer and left us with less than 30 works.

His **String Quartet in c minor, Op.6** was composed between 1908 and 1910. It is written in a post-Brahmsian, late Romantic idiom. A style cultivated at that time by composers such as Arnold Schoenberg (before he started composing 12 tone music), Dohnanyi, Busoni, Zemlinsky, Karl Weigl, and Franz Schmidt. It is in four movements, beginning with a highly dramatic, rich and powerful *Allegro moderato* that immediately captures the listener's attention. A slow movement, *Sostenuto assai*, is almost funereal in quality, a deeply felt elegaic piece. The highly original third movement, *Scherzo, allegro*, is full of whirling, syncopated lines and is very cleverly conceived. The opening theme to the finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, resembles a fate motif and bears some relationship to the first movement. The music marches inexorably forward gaining excitement as the tempo increases until finally a *stretto* leads to the coda, *Presto*, and a tremendous whirlwind finish. A first rate work, deserving concert performance and a good choice for amateur ensembles.



Alberto Nepomuceno (1864-1920) was born in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. He received his first music lessons from his father who was a violin teacher and also the cathedral organist of Fortaleza. He began serious study of both the violin and piano in 1872 at the age of eight. When his father died in 1880, Nepomuceno was forced to drop out of university and give music lessons to support his mother and younger sister. In 1885, Nepomuceno moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he continued to study the piano and also took some lessons in com-

position. In 1887, he composed *Dança de Negros*, one of the first compositions to use Brazilian ethnic motifs. This work resulted in his widely being regarded as one of the up and coming young men of Brazilian music and he was given a grant to study music in Europe. He left for Italy in 1888 to study piano with Giovanni Sgambatti and composition with Eugenio Terziani at the Santa Cecilia Music Academy in Rome. In 1890, Nepomuceno moved to Berlin where he began composition lessons with Heinrich von Herzogenberg, while at the same time frequently traveling to Vienna to study with the world famous piano teacher Theodor Lechetzky and to attend concerts given by Brahms and Hans von Bülow. It was in Lechetzky's class that he met the Norwegian pianist Walborg Bang, whom he later married. She was a friend and prize student of Edvard Grieg's. Sometime in 1891, he enrolled in Berlin's Stern Conservatory to take a degree in composition. In 1893, just before graduating, he interrupted his studies to marry Walborg and went to live at Grieg's house in Bergen. His friendship with Grieg was instrumental in strengthening his desire to create a Brazilian nationalist school of composition as well as his commitment to writing music which utilized Brazilian folk melody. In 1894, Nepomuceno returned to Berlin where he took his degree and conducted the Berlin Philharmonic in a performance of two of his compositions. Next, he enrolled at the Schola Cantorum, in Paris, in order to improve his mastery of the organ and studied with Professor Alexandre Guilmant. Here, he met and became good friends with Camille Saint Saëns, Vincent D'Indy and Claude Debussy among others. He was present at the World première of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, and was the first to present it in Brazil. In 1895, Nepomuceno returned to Brazil to take up an appointment at the National School of Music. Two years later he was appointed Professor of composition. Seven years after that, he served as its director. During these years, Nepomuceno set about achieving his goal of encouraging young composers to write music utilizing the melodies and dances of Brazil. Among his many students was Heitor Villa Lobos. He not only championed and also performed the controversial works of the new generation of Brazilian composers such as the works of the young Villa Lobos. In 1900, Nepomuceno returned to Europe to concertize and visit friends. It was at this time that he received an invitation from Gustav Mahler, who wished to perform Nepomuceno's opera *Artemis* at the Vienna Court Opera. Mahler proposed that they would share the conducting responsibilities. However, before he could accept, Nepomuceno became quite ill and was forced to spend many months convalescing in Norway at Grieg's home in Bergen before returning to Brazil. He made two more trips to Europe where he conducted and performed. It was during one of these trips that Richard Strauss conducted one of Nepomuceno's operas. Nepomuceno's importance to the development of classical music in Brazil cannot be overstated. As noted, he was the leading composer as well as teacher of his day. His many contacts and close friendships with the leading composers and conductors in Europe proved to be invaluable to the young men he sent abroad to study. The bulk of Nepomuceno's work is, in one form or another, for voice. He also wrote a considerable amount of piano music. His chamber music, including his three string quartets, was almost entirely written during his prolonged first stay in Europe and while he was still studying. Although these works have no opus numbers, Nepomuceno did not by any means regard them as juvenilia. Not only were they performed from manuscript both in Germany and France during the years of his first European sojourn, but also many times since in Brazil. It is also important to consider that Nepomuceno, shortly before his death, took care to see that the manuscripts were safely deposited in the archives of the National School of Music.

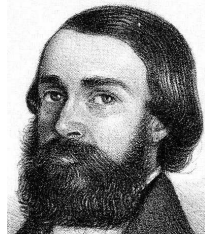
Although **String Quartet No.1 in b minor** has not specifically been subtitled "Brazilian" as was the Third Quartet, nevertheless, the music is suffused with lovely Brazilian melodies and

unusual rhythms which are expressed in the romantic idiom he mastered during his studies in Europe. The manuscript bears the inscription "Rome 1889". The first movement, has for its opening theme an unusual syncopated melody introduced by the first violin. The gentler and more lyrical second theme is folkloric in nature, but I cannot say for sure that it is a Brazilian folk tune. Most of the thematic material is in the first violin part, however there are some good episodes of rhythmic interplay between the first violin and the cello as the syncopated first theme is extensively and competently developed. One can see from the working out that Nepomuceno followed German models rather than then current Italian practices. The second movement is marked *Andante*. The main theme is very romantic, perhaps it could be styled a song without words. In this movement, Nepomuceno makes much better use of the inner voices, giving them important, and sometimes quite involved running lines against the long cantabile of the first violin. While the preceding two movements are competently handled, there is nothing which really strikes the listener or player as being a cut above average. True, the main theme to the first movement has a fresh and original quality to it, but at the same time, it appears to be the product of hard work and somewhat labored. It is the Scherzo, which comes next, that serves notice that this is a talented composer. Here, there is the happy marriage between an appealing melody and the lively, toe-tapping rhythm to which it is set. The slower and more lyrical trio maintains the sunny mood found in the Scherzo. Nepomuceno uses what could well be a Brazilian folk melody. This bright Scherzo and its lovely trio are something special and begin to make the case for saving this work from being consigned to oblivion. Following the Scherzo is a compelling finale. It is very good and certainly effective. Marked *Allegro spirituosissimo*, it is certainly that. Nepomuceno, who clearly had a gift for unusual rhythms, begins his theme on the last 16th of the first beat. The bright spirited theme (top next column) is perfectly set to a rhythm of running 16ths, at first heard only in the 1st violin, but soon in all of the voices. The second theme seems to literally come out of nowhere. The first violin pauses for the briefest of moments after a long downward running passage of 16ths. Then, the jaunty second subject, literally leaps out. Though jolly and seemingly quite simple, the melody nevertheless has a nobility about it. As the other voices are brought in, a telling, but high speed dialogue develops. To top it off, there is a well-done, satisfying coda. In sum, this is a quartet which gets stronger as it goes along, certainly to be preferred as opposed to the opposite. It is fun to play, with reasonably good part writing and presents no technical difficulty for the players. It is enough to be brought into the concert hall, not just as an example of early Brazilian string quartet writing, but on its own strengths.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor was composed in 1890 during Nepomuceno's last year in Rome. There are at least three very different versions of this quartet, and this, at one time, led to speculation that there was a fourth quartet. There isn't. The quartet was extensively revised, with whole sections being replaced with entirely different music. As such, there can never be a definitive edition. The fact that Nepomuceno made three very different revisions is a good indication he was not satisfied with this work. I would not say it is a bad work but it is certainly the least original sounding of the three quartets. The opening *Allegro con fuoco* has an attractive and well handled main theme, but it must be said that it resembles so many others from the pens of Central European romantic composers. Further on, we find that the style becomes orchestral rather than intimate. The second movement, *Andante*, begins with a sweet lied, but it could never be mistaken for any kind of folk song, be it Brazilian or Austrian. Again, the treatment resembles typical competent German writing. There are, however, two very interesting, dramatic episodes in which lengthy tremolo passages are quite effectively used. The short *Intermezzo* which comes next is more like a scherzo. Not at all

bad, but it does not rise to the level of the scherzo in the First Quartet. The finale, also *Allegro con fuoco*, begins with a theme that sounds oriental, Turkish or Egyptian. The middle section is comprised of a lyrical melody effectively treated in the manner of the Italian opera composers who wrote quartets. (e.g. Donizetti and Verdi). In writing this, I thought about American and English composers, such as George Chadwick, Arthur Foote and Charles Villiers Stanford. They were all strongly influenced by the German romantic style (and attacked for it), but somehow they seemed to pull it off better. Take Stanford's First Piano Quartet or Foote's First Piano Trio, influenced by Brahms and Mendelssohn respectively. Their treatment is fresh and original in feel, despite the influence. This quartet does not convince in the same way. I cannot recommend it for concert and while suitable for amateurs, I would not put it near the top of my play list.

String Quartet No.3 in b minor has been given the subtitle *Brasileiro*, i.e. Brazilian. In it, Nepomuceno used well-known Brazilian folk melodies. It is said to be the first instance of a Brazilian composer writing in a nationalist style. It was written in 1891 while he was studying with Herzogenberg in Berlin and more importantly, by which time he had met and befriended Grieg. The opening movement *Allegro moderato* begins with a sad, pleading theme in the first violin, which immediately captures the listener's attention. As the violin soars into its highest registers, the other three voices are given very dramatic rhythmic figures which accentuate the violin's almost desperate plaint. When the violin melody slowly begins to lower in pitch, the cello, in a less urgent voice, is allowed to take it further. Skies brighten with the entrance of the sunny second theme, which is unmistakably of Brazilian origin. This is a very long distance indeed from the kind of thematic material which appears in the Second Quartet. There is a very good likelihood that Grieg's encouragement to use Brazilian melodies in his composition was in large part responsible for this change. The dramatic climax is reached in a wild, stormy section of great originality. A short, but effective, coda brings the movement to a close. The main theme to the second movement, *Andante*, begins as a melancholy funeral dirge. In structure, it is a theme and set of very clever variations. The mood is immediately brightened by the first variation. One can imagine a Brazilian wake at which the participants, after a bit of mourning, break open the bottles and begin to celebrate. Perhaps the most striking variation is given to the viola who brings forth a dramatic aria. After many different mood swings, the mournful dirge at last returns to end the movement. An *Intermezzo* follows, but, as in the First Quartet, it is really a brilliant scherzo. The cello brings forth the carefree main theme set to a Brazilian dance rhythm known as the *Lundu*. The melodic motifs which accompany it resemble another Brazilian traditional rhythm, the *Fadinho*. The rhythms become even more unusual as the movement progresses. Then, suddenly, it morphs into an authentic Mendelssohnian scherzo so successfully executed one might well conclude Felix had visited Brazil as well as Italy and Scotland. Space does not allow me to include all of the examples of this spectacular movement. Nepomuceno recognized its excellence, orchestrated it and conducted its premiere in 1897 at the *Concertos Populares*. The finale, marked *Allegretto*, should have been marked *Allegro*. It begins with a drum rhythm of the Amazonian natives in the cello. After two measures the theme is given out and the others then enter in canonic fashion. It almost sounds like another scherzo, with the four voices happily racing around after each other, making effective, but technically difficult hand-offs. Then, in the midst of this celebratory mood, a jarring, dissonant chord is sounded. It announces the melodramatic reprise of the funeral dirge from the second movement. The coda has a surprise ending. With this quartet, in my opinion, this is a masterpiece, in the front rank of such works from this time period. It absolutely deserves to be heard in concert and can be played by experienced amateurs as well.



Josef Netzer (1808-1864) was born in the Austrian town of Zams in the Tirol. After studying with his father and local teachers in Innsbruck, he traveled to Vienna where he studied with Johan Gansbacher and Simon Sechter, who taught many a famous composer including Schubert and Bruckner. He was a close friend of Schubert and often played music with him. In travels to Germany he met both Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer who were both impressed by his opera *Mara*. For most of his life, he worked as a theater director holding various posts in Vienna, Mainz, Leipzig and Graz. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in f minor dates from 1836 when Netzer was 24 and was the direct result of his studies with Sechter. In the opening movement, *Allegro non troppo*, there is a very deliberate feel to the main theme which has tinges of Beethoven. The second subject is lighter and quicker. All of the voices take a part in presenting of them. The second movement, *Adagio*, has a lovely question and answer response between the first violin and cello, very Mozartean. In third place is a Scherzo, sounding Schubertian. The finale, *Allegro*, is tuneful and light hearted. A pleasant work good for home but not the concert hall.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major was composed ten years later in 1846. The opening *Allegro molto* is workmanlike and effective but the thematic material is not particularly strong. The same can be said of the *Andante* which comes second. The Scherzo which follows is somewhat better but does not stand out by virtue of any melody or use of rhythm. The finale, *Allegro molto*, is more of the same. There are just too many other works of this ilk which have a lot more to offer home music makers so I do not recommend spending any time with it.

Ludwig Neuhoff (1859-1909) was born in Berlin and studied organ and composition at the Leipzig Conservatory and then with Joseph Rheinberger in Munich. Most of his music was for organ, however, he did write one string quartet.

His **String Quartet in C Major, Op.10** appeared in 1894. It was frequently programmed, at least in Germany up until the First World War. It is a work with appealing melodies and each of the voices is given a good part to play. The first movement, *Allegro comodo*, has two excellent themes, the first captures attention by means of its rhythm, the second, which in canon form, has a striking pizzicato accompaniment to a warm melody in the cello. The second movement, *Presto*, is a lively scherzo with a contrasting trio also in canon form. A charming *Andante sostenuto* with an even more pleasing *Adagio* episode comes next. The finale is an energetic *Allegro* with an effective fugal development section. This quartet can be recommended both to amateurs and professionals and a concert performance would not be amiss.



Although **Carl Nielsen** (1865-1931) achieved international recognition as a composer, today his music is rarely performed outside of Scandinavia. Certainly, it is rare indeed to come across a live performance of any of his chamber music. In nearly forty years of concert-going, I have yet to encounter any of his string quartet on a program outside of Denmark. Were it not for the occasional radio performance or the availability of these works on CD, few if any non-Scandinavians would be aware of these fine works. Nielsen was born on the island of Fyn (Funen), the seventh of twelve children. His father was a painter by trade, who also played the violin and cornet and as a result was much in demand as a village musician and active member of its band. Nielsen exhibited a talent for music at an early age and was given lessons by his father and a local teacher. He too played in the band cornet. Eventually, he began to study the violin in

earnest. He remembered that during these years, "I got to know the quartets of Haydn, Pleyel and Onslow and was so fascinated by them that I decided to write one myself. A month later it was finished...It had no originality, of course, but is fresh and vivid." The quartet was never published, but nevertheless was important in furthering Nielsen's career in music. Two years after finishing the quartet, Nielsen traveled to Copenhagen and showed it to Niels Gade, then the most prominent composer and teacher in Denmark. Gade recognized Nielsen's potential and recommended he study at the Copenhagen Conservatory. With the financial help of friends, Nielsen was able to do just that for the next three years. His main subject was violin, but he also began taking composition seriously and during this time produced another quartet—again never published. But throughout this period, chamber music was Nielsen's main compositional preoccupation up until around 1900. His music has often been described as a reaction against the late Romantic style. He started out from Classical harmony of the 18th and 19th centuries but during the 1890's, he developed his harmony, apparently independently, to what might be called 'extended tonality' where all 12 semitones could be used within a tonally centered scale. When one hears Nielsen's chamber music, which was for the most part written during this period, it is impossible to not to be impressed at how different, modern and original it sounds. And it must be admitted, Nielsen's chamber music has never won a permanent place in the international repertoire. I have heard people say that they are an acquired taste, that they are austere, bleak and polytonal. While there is some truth to this, by comparison to Bartok's quartets, they are more traditionally tonal and far more approachable. Most importantly, these are trail-blazing works, which long before Bartok began to write his, paved the way for some of the new paths into which chamber music flowed during the 20th century.

Nielsen's first published string quartet, **String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.13** was composed during 1887-1888. It received its premiere in 1889 but was not published until 1900. It was dedicated to Johan Svendsen, the Norwegian composer, who played an important part in the musical life of Copenhagen. The opening movement, *Allegro energico*, immediately serves notice on the listener that this is not your typical late Romantic string quartet. After a nervous development, the unabashedly lush second theme makes its entrance, announced by the cello. A pulsating background of 16th notes accompanies this lyrical melody and gives it a surprisingly Italian quality. In any case, the writing at this point becomes tonally far more conventional than the opening measures. This is a big movement in which the main theme and this secondary melody struggle to take center stage. But there is also a very dramatic third theme which makes its appearance in the middle section and is derived from the pulsating 16th notes. The music sounds like a combination of Busoni and Bazzini. The lyrical second movement, *Andante amoroso*, is completely different in style with regard to its very traditional use of melody and harmony. The music is characteristic of many of Nielsen's early slow movements. It begins quite slowly in choral fashion with a highly romantic melody. Contrast is provided by an agitated and pulsating middle section in the minor, quicker in tempo. Unlike the main section, here, Nielsen's tonality as shown by his use of chromaticism and semi-tones in the descending passage is more adventurous. After the music rises to a climax, it slowly dissipates and heralds the return of the opening *Andante* which this time is played somewhat more quickly. Next comes a thrusting *Scherzo, Allegro molto*. The main theme is stormy and powerful, characterized more by its rhythm than by its melody. It sounds as if it has its antecedents in Schumann, except for the doublet that Nielsen throws, like a wrench, into the middle of the rhythm. Of course, Schumann, most likely, would not have interrupted it in mid-phrase as Nielsen does. The trio section, which is almost as long as the *schерzo*, has a gentle melody over a rustic drone in the cello. The finale has the interesting title, *Allegro inquieto*

(meaning restless); Nielsen must have been thumbing through a dictionary of Italian musical terms to have found it. True to its title, it starts in an agitated fashion. The first violin is given a highly dramatic subject, accompanied by off-beat pizzicati in the other voices. The elaboration is rather good with clever use of grace notes and unexpected twists in rhythm. Unfortunately, the development is not as strong and the middle section, though not bad, has a forced quality, and is not as convincing as the opening. Nielsen makes up for it with an exciting coda. It deserves to be heard in concert and amateurs will find it an attractive work.

In late 1889, Nielsen obtained a stipendium which allowed him to travel to Germany. While there, he finished work on **String Quartet No.2 in f minor, Op.5**. and was pleased with the result. He later wrote, "Here I have found my own musical language." Its opus number is lower because it was published 6 years before the first quartet. The work was premiered in Berlin with Joseph Joachim in the audience. Nielsen recorded that Joachim thought "there was much that was frightful but he praised me for those passages displaying fantasy and talent." Certainly for 1890, it has to be considered far ahead of most everything being written. This fact will be driven home if you keep in mind that Mahler was 30; Verdi, Bruckner and Brahms were all still alive and composing. Within ten years, in part because of this work, Nielsen's name was internationally known. During his lifetime, it was performed with some regularity in northern Europe. The opening movement, *Allegro non troppo ma energico* begins with turbulent urgency, created by the main theme's syncopated rhythm and the 16th note accompaniment in the middle voices. As the music builds to an early dramatic climax, Nielsen relieves the tension through a highly chromatic downward passage leading to a tonic resolution. There is a very romantic second theme, first heard in the cello and then completed by the violin. The tempo of this more relaxed lyrical melody is gradually cranked up bringing with it renewed emotional energy. The lovely opening theme to the slow movement, *Un poco adagio* is a deeply felt, mildly sad lied. Next is a very attractive and playful *Allegretto scherzando*. Not only the opening theme but also the second subject and the trio are traditionally tonal, without any harsh chromaticism or polytonality. The finale, *Allegro appassionato*; to our modern ears would not find much that could cause offense, but even the brief episodes, of what were surely very adventurous tonality for 1890, could well have shocked the ears of Joachim and his contemporaries, for whom Bruckner was the outer tonal limit. The somewhat relentless opening theme given out by the first violin. The development is quite exciting, using the same off-beat harmonic accompaniment that is in the first movement. The middle second section, marked *Meno allegro ma energico*, is considerably slower and has an exotic air. The dense scoring gives it an almost symphonic quality, which mars the effect to some extent. To sum up, this is a fresh and original work, especially for 1890. And, judging from the first three movements alone, this quartet might qualify for the appellation of masterwork. The fact that it is the finale which is weaker than the rest is more problematic than if it had been a middle movement. So, although the finale is not bad, its flaws are such that I can only call this quartet a very good work, well-deserving of a place in the repertoire, but not a masterwork.

Nearly eight years were to pass before Nielsen attempted to compose another string quartet. Then, in December of 1897, he began work on what was to become his **String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major, Op.14**. It was completed in 1899. In his diary Nielsen relates that while cycling to his publisher's of place of business in Copenhagen, where he was then living, he came across a carriage with a horse that had stumbled and fallen. As a boy raised on a farm, he was familiar with horses and stopped to help the stranded owner of the carriage. He handed his manuscript to a small boy, who was standing nearby, so that he could right the horse. By the time he had got the horse back up and on its feet,

the boy had run off and Nielsen was forced to reconstruct the entire work mostly from memory. As he himself admitted, the result was not identical to the original version which has never been found. In any event, as a consequence of this mishap, the work was not published until December of 1900. It was dedicated to Edvard Grieg. This version received its first public performance in 1901. It was coldly received by the critics with one of them writing, "I can describe the music of this quartet as follows: It reminds me of how a fight between a dog and a cat might sound. Nielsen apparently wishes his performers to tear at their strings." This kind of criticism is not surprising in light of the fact that there was nothing which sounded anything like as modern in 1900 as this music. For the next several decades critics called the quartet a difficult and ungrateful work to play and hear. It represents a major advance in Nielsen's tonal language. There is no getting away from the fact that the opening measures of the first movement, *Allegro con brio*, have an uncompromising harshness to them. But it is just this quality which has led later day critics to consider the quartet as a descendent of Beethoven's Late Quartets. Full of contrapuntal effects, the music is boldly assertive, in your face, to put a modern spin on it. It stands up and says, "look at this". The second movement, however, casts off this mantle of harshness for one of lyrical introspection. After a brief, hesitant and chromatic *Andante sostenuto* introduction, the first violin states the main theme at the *Andante*. From this quiet and restful theme, Nielsen builds an edifice which at times rises to great dramatic heights of considerable harmonic complexity. The third movement, *Allegretto pastorale*, is an intermezzo and the most striking and immediately appealing of the four movements. It is characterized by wayward chromaticism in the theme given out by the first violin against a very imaginative accompaniment in the other voices. This is very attractive writing, but Nielsen tops it with an incredible *Presto* trio section in which "all hell breaks loose". Stormy and exciting, the music plunges ahead dragging all in its wake. The first violin is given a racing series of triplets against powerful double stop chords, sometimes syncopated, in the other voices. This is then followed by a very beautiful, lyrical interlude before the return of the main section. The main theme of the finale, *Allegro coraggioso*, begins in a fashion which would allow it to serve as music to a cowboy western movie, something of the sort Aaron Copeland was later to write. Then, after the full statement of the main theme, Nielsen introduces a second theme upon which he begins a series of fugues followed by an appealing and original *pizzicato intermezzo* section. When things really get going, one hears the polyphony of the opening movement, but in a much tamer setting. Perhaps Nielsen recognized that three more movements as unrelenting as the first was unacceptable. This is a very good, though somewhat uneven, work. Still, it ought to be programmed in concert. Though the first movement must be worked at, amateurs should be able to navigate the others fairly smoothly.

Nielsen composed his last **String Quartet No.4 in F Major, Op.44** in 1906. Initially the quartet appeared as Op.19 and was subtitled *Piacevolezza*, however, Nielsen later revised it and it was published as his Op.44 in 1923. Critics have generally attacked the work as being light-weight. There is no denying it is not a weighty work by comparison to his two previous efforts. But by giving the work the title *Piacevolezza*, which can be translated as agreeable and charming, it is clear he was not aiming for something weighty. The opening movement, *Allegro non tanto e comodo*, was originally marked *Allegro piacevole ed indolente*. One could easily make the argument that this movement is a perfect example of studied casualness by a composer who was an expert at creating music of a specific character whenever he chose. For his treatment of the thematic material, Nielsen proceeds exactly as an early 20th century Mozart might have—not an ersatz neo-classical Mozart, but a real 20th century one. So while the music lacks drama, power and emotion, it makes up for

this in its *laissez faire* charm. The second movement, *Adagio con sentimento religioso* is unquestionably an extraordinarily fine example of a choral fantasy. It is the third movement, *Allegretto moderato ed innocento* which is the most original, most striking and immediately appealing of the quartet. This is a playful scherzo full of surprises and unexpected twists and turns. The theme begins in an quiet and unassuming fashion, simple if you will, and then suddenly a *forte* glissando followed by a powerful crash of eight 32nd notes disrupt the whole proceedings. This is then followed by a cute and charming rondo section. The trio is equally fine, beginning with a singing melody in the cello. Rather than proceeding a la Verdi, Nielsen introduces all of the others into the fray and creates a brief dramatic crescendo before returning to the main section. The finale, begins with a very brief *Molto adagio* introduction which is really nothing more than a few double stops held for several beats. Then, the main section, *Allegro non tanto, ma molto scherzoso*, is let loose. What begins primarily as a rondo has many unusual interludes, some slow and a bit wayward. The uplifting and lyrical second theme is given a brief fugal treatment and perhaps can be considered as the apotheosis of the entire work. Overall, the music is buoyant, charming and at times full of humor. Yes, it is devoid of soul-searching and makes no attempts to scale then heights. But why should that be held against it when it is perfect in what it sets out to achieve. A fine work that should be in the repertoire and which should provide no great technical problems for amateurs.



Ludolf Nielsen (1876-1939) was born in the Danish town of Nørre Tvede. He studied violin locally before moving to Copenhagen, where he studied violin, piano and theory at the Danish Royal Academy of Music. As a composer, he was largely self-taught. He served as a violist and also as conductor of the Tivoli Orchestra. At the same time, he formed a string quartet in which he also

served as the violist. He wrote three string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major, Op.1 dates from 1900. In the first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is genial but unremarkable. The Scherzo *allegro* which comes next with its sharp rhythm is original and attention grabbing but not easy to play, especially in the trio section with its changing 6/8 and 3/4 sections. The *Andante appassionato* which is next is quite atmospheric and makes a strong impression. A good movement. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, has for its main subject, a pleasant march-like theme and some very appealing melodic material which comes later. For amateurs, yes. Concert no.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor, Op.5 was completed in 1904 and is a cyclical work in four movements. The first movement begins *Lento maestoso* with the main theme played in unison. The music immediately dies away into nothingness before turning into the pastoral *Allegro moderato* main section. The influence of Wagner and late Romantic Danish melody can be heard. The second movement, *Allegro amabile*, is very different in mood. It is a three part scherzo with a much brighter spirit. One hears echoes of Johan Svendsen. The trio section is more reflective. In the third movement, *Andante lento*, the high spirits of the preceding movement are replaced by the doleful strains of a funeral march. Further along, the music reaches an impassioned climax. The finale, *Andante maestoso*, is quite unusual. It begins with a slow, majestic march, which harks back to the main theme of the first movement, but it is so altered as to be almost unrecognizable. Suddenly the movement changes mood and tempo without warning, speeding ahead with un-suppressed energy and passion. This is a solid work, it could perhaps be brought into concert, and can be managed by amateurs without much problem.

String Quartet No.3 in C Major, Op.41 was completed in 1920 and its mood is very different from his earlier quartets. Not

only had he lost both his parents to the great influenza epidemic of 1918 but the First World War and its aftermath weighed upon him. His tonal language was greatly altered and this quartet somewhat programmatic. One critic noted the four movements might be summarized as my roots and fore bearers, my youth, grief and finally, new life and hope. The first movement, Allegretto pastorale, begins softly and simply and grows as an awakening. There is a floating, dream-like quality to much of the movement. The second movement, Allegro moderato grazioso, seems to take up where the first movement left off, beginning in a optimistic mood. There is a quicker and more lively middle sections, perhaps likened to a fiddler's hoe down, and indicative of the fact that Nielsen played the violin professionally in his youth. Unquestionably, the third movement, Adagio con dolore, is the quartet's center of gravity. The beginning of the movement sounds hymn-like with spherical sounds but the powerful middle section is funereal. This movement was often heard on Danish radio on sad public occasions. The finale, Allegro, combines a sense of optimism with the horror of loss which can be heard in brief strident tonal moments. Although this quartet as well as the two others are far more approachable as those of Carl Nielsen, they lack that certain something. The thematic material is not memorable or strikingly original. It does not stick with one. Some may find these works worthy of their time.



Ludvig Norman (1831-1885) was born in Stockholm. He studied at the Leipzig Conservatory shortly after it was founded by Mendelssohn. His composition teachers were Julius Rietz and Moritz Hauptmann, his piano professor was Ignaz Moscheles. A prolific composer, he also enjoyed a career as a pianist, conductor and teacher. Among his many pupils was the prominent composer

Elfrida Andrée. Norman composed in a wide variety of genres, and chamber music was an important part of his oeuvre, among which there are two piano trios, a piano quartet, a piano sextet, five possibly six string quartets, a string quintet, a string sextet and a string octet. While it is thought he wrote six string quartets this is not certain as one is lost, another appears to be part of an existing one. And, the number is also unreliable. The first quartet was known as Op.19. It is lost.

String Quartet No.2 in E Major, Op.20 was composed in 1855 but was not published until 1880. The opening movement, Allegro grazioso, is pretty much that, graceful, not much in the way of dramatic climaxes. The thematic material is divided between the first violin and cello. Second is a Scherzo, allegro moderato. It has a rather unusual rhythm, not easy to make sound very nice and not worth the trouble given the thematic material. The Andante cantabile which follows is unremarkable, warm like sitting on a sofa in Grandma's house with the sun streaming upon one's face. There is a turbulent middle section but it is not enough to save this movement. The finale, Allegro vivace, is the best of this quartet. The opening theme is exciting but overly busy and at times hard to make sound good. Leave this alone.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.24 was composed in 1858 though parts exist in manuscript, appears not to have been published. It is listed as No.4 but in his list of works there appears to be no No.3.

String Quartet No.4 in C Major, Op.42 was composed in 1871 but was not published until a dozen years later in 1883. The opening Allegro wanders about with no real direction. It does, on occasion rise to some rather good climaxes but on the whole is too lengthy for the material. In second place is an Andantino con variazione. The theme, unfortunately, is rather boring which does not bode well for the variations which follow. The best part of the whole affair is when it is finally over. A muscular and thrusting Allegro vivace, taking the place of a scherzo, holds one's atten-

tion and is rather good. The finale, Allegro con brio, starts off in orchestra fashion, lots of noise. Lots of bustle and rushing about in hopes of creating excitement but the thematic material is threadbare and the overall effect is of a lot sawing to no purpose. Perhaps some amateurs may enjoy this work, but certainly it is no candidate for the concert hall.

String Quartet No.5 in a minor, Op.65 is occasionally listed as his sixth. It was most likely his last, completed and published in 1884, the year before his death. His schooling at the Leipzig Conservatory is still on display as the work shows the influence of both Schumann and Mendelssohn, the models which were held up to all the students there at the time as worthy of studying. The big opening movement, Allegro agitato, has a broad sweep, and considerable forward energy as evidenced by several episodes of rushing passage work. At last, the thematic material holds one's interest throughout. A lovely, prayer-like Andante sostenuto e cantabile is a Mendelssohnian song without words. The Tempo di Menuetto which follows is a rather romantic take on the classical form, not at all bad. The finale, Allegro molto vivace, is for the most part upbeat but it is the weakest of the four movements. This quartet is his best and can be recommended to amateurs, but I would not recommend it for concert.



Zygmunt Noskowski (1846-1909) was born in Warsaw and studied at its conservatory before traveling to Berlin to study with Friedrich Kiel, one of Europe's leading teachers of composition. After holding several positions abroad, he returned to Warsaw in 1880 where he remained for the rest of his life. He worked not only as a composer, but also became a famous teacher, a prominent conductor and a journalist. He

was one of the most important figures in Polish music during the late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th. He taught virtually all the important Polish composers of the next generation.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.9 dating from around 1875. It is combines main stream elements of Central European music with Polish folk music. The opening Allegro con brio begins quite unusually with a series of eight crashing chords which herald a dramatic theme. The reoccurrence of these chords brings forth the more lyrical second subject. A good movement. The lovely second movement, Allegretto moderato, subtitled Intermezzo, recalls Mendelssohn. The trio section is a jovial interlude to the darker intermezzo. A gentle and romantic Adagio non troppo serves as the third movement. The finale, Allegretto quasi oberek, is based on one of Poland's five national dances--the fast-paced Oberek. No masterpiece but quite a good work. Recommended for amateurs and the occasional concert performance.

String Quartet No.2 in E Major (WoO) was composed between 1879-1883. It consists of four movements beginning with an Allegro serio which is far too long and has neither focus nor memorable themes. Next comes an Allegretto vivace, a scherzo dominated by its rhythm. It is effective and interesting. Then there is an Andante doloroso, more mysterious-sounding than sad. Here, the viola is given the lead for a considerable time before the violin takes over. The accompaniment is pizzicato giving the movement a kind of recitativ effect. Lastly comes an Allegro giocoso, which starts off as a pleasant, bumpy ride. In the middle comes a violin cadenza, which seems out of place. Not a bad work, it can be recommended to amateurs but not for concert.

Ottokar Nováček (1866-1900) was a true exemplar of the old, multinational Austrian Empire of the Habsburgs. Of Czech extraction, he was born in southern Hungary in what was then a German speaking town called Weißkirchen. (Fehertéplom in Hungarian and Bela Crkva in Serbo-Croatian) Novacek began studying the violin with his father and then with Jakob Dont at



at the Vienna Conservatory before switching to the Leipzig Conservatory where he continued his violin studies Henry Schradieck and Adolf Brodsky while taking composition lessons from Salomon Jadassohn. He played in the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra as well as the famous Brodsky Quartet before moving to the United States where he played in the Boston Symphony Orchestra before serving as principal violist of

the New York Philharmonic. Although he is best known for his Perpetuum mobile for violin and orchestra, he composed several other works including a piano concerto and three string quartets. As a member of a concertizing string quartet, Novacek learned all of the best works of the repertoire which contributed to his fine sense of what makes for a good quartet.

His **String Quartet No.1 in e minor** (no opus number) appeared in 1891 and was premiered by the Brodsky Quartet of which he was then a part in Leipzig. It requires good ensemble players to keep the music together. This is especially true in the first movement, Allegro, with captivating but tricky rhythms which help to give the music high spirits. The Adagio ma non troppo which follows is truly impressive. It is the third movement, Prestissimo, which presents the greatest challenge because it is quite difficult to play it at the tempo it requires to make it sound exciting, which it is. The quartet concludes with effective Allegro agitato which is written on a large scale. A candidate for concert and for good level amateur players.

His String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major, Op.10 was published in 1898. The composer's nationality can be heard especially in the music of the outer movements. The first movement, Allegro molto, bears the additional marking of 'in high spirits'. This is certainly a charming movement with fine writing, but best of all is the beautiful tonalities. The second movement is a magnificent, deeply felt Adagio. The Presto which follows begins with a fleet subject but also has a pretty, contrasting melody. The finale, Vivace, is also marked jovial and lively but, while not bad, is not quite up to the quality of the preceding movements. Novacek uses a Czech folk dance for the main theme. The music requires polished playing from all of the voices to be effective. This work is strong enough for an occasional concert performance and it can be warmly recommended to amateur players of good standard.

String Quartet No.3 in C Major, Op.13 was published four years after his death in 1904. The attractive opening movement, Allegro, features a motto or leitmotif first brought forth by the viola. The second theme is charming. A Scherzo vivace which follows captures attention by virtue of its edgy rhythms and its fetching main theme. The high point of the quartet is the very moving third movement, Hymnus, adagio ma non troppo. It is for the most part a deeply felt funereal dirge. One wonders if the composer knew or anticipated his own death. The finale, Allegro con brio, begins with a massive, maestoso introduction. The main section has a march-like theme for its main subject. The maestoso appears again later as a rhapsodic cadenza in the first violin leading to very exciting stretta coda. Certainly an excellent choice for concert and amateurs of high standard.



It seemed unlikely that **Vitězslav Novák** (1870-1949) would become a musician having begun by hating music as a result of being brutally forced to study the violin and the piano as a young child. But a fascination for composition, which he discovered in his teens, led to his decision to enter the Prague Conservatory, where he studied with Dvorak among others. Dvorak's example of using Czech folk melody in his music to foster the nationalist cause at a time when the Czech and Slovak peoples were seeking statehood from Austria encouraged the young com-

poser to follow this path. After graduating from the Conservatory in 1896, he traveled to eastern Moravia and Slovakia where the local folk melodies he found served as a source of inspiration for him. It was a seminal moment which led to Novák becoming a leading proponent of the Czech nationalism in music in the generation after Dvorak and Smetana.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.22 bears the fruits of Novák's travels and is brimming with the melodies and rhythms of the regions he visited during his trip. Composed in 1899, it won the 1900 Czech Chamber Music Society Prize. Novák wrote that the opening movement, Allegro moderato, was inspired by the landscape of eastern Moravia. The first violin brings forth a calm melody, full of longing, perhaps a kind of homesickness one might feel. Novák tells us that this soft melody was an attempt to recreating the "hailing" calls of the hill shepherds with their flocks. The second movement, Scherzo, Allegro commodo, is actually a rather leisurely peasant dance. There is a sly, humorous quality to it. The finale, Andante mesto--Allegro ben ritmico, is full of the folk tunes of Slovakia. It seems to have trouble getting started, trouble deciding on a tempo or a temperament. Again and again the tempo is doubled only to return to the slower, deliberate opening tempo. The mood of the music is like shifting sands under one's feet, now gay, now passionate, now reflective and yearning, now defiant. When put altogether it creates a beautiful mosaic made out of Slavic folk music. This quartet is a gem which deserves regular concert performance outside of the Czech Republic. In addition, amateurs will find it a very appealing post Dvorak, late romantic work. A must for concert performance and as it has no real technical challenges, recommended to amateurs

String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.35 was begun in 1904 shortly after an extended stay in the forests of Wallachia. Upon its premiere, it was awarded the highest prize of the Czech Chamber Music Society of Prague. At the time, its two movement format was certainly a novelty. The opening movement, Largo misterioso, is entitled Fuga (Fugue) by Novák himself. The fugue starts traditionally in hushed tones in a traditional way with the statement of the theme, but its breadth and pace are such that most of the time one is unaware that one is hearing a fugue. The theme is taken from a Wallachian folk melody but it is only upon the start of the second movement, Fantasia, that one recognizes this fact. The Fantasia is actually three movements in one. It begins with a powerful Allegro passionate in which the treatment of theme from the first movement makes it clear that this is folk music. The middle section, Quasi scherzo, follows without pause and brings relief from the highly impassioned music which has preceded it. In the final section, the Fugue from the first movement returns in a truncated form and brings the music to an apotheosis. This is a highly original work, very suitable for concert and not hard to play so it can be recommended to amateurs.

Novak made several attempts to begin what ultimately became his **String Quartet No.3 in G Major, Op.66**. The first was in 1928, but he found that his material did not satisfy him. Throughout the 1930s, he kept trying. He noted in his memoirs that he found it very difficult to return to the genre of chamber music after a hiatus of three decades and he was concerned that what he wrote might damage what reputation and prestige he had gained from his earlier works. Finally in 1938, he began work on it again. The Quartet is in two large movements. The opening movement, Allegro risoluto is a kind of rondo, based on Moravian and Slovakian themes. In the middle there is what begins as a light-hearted fugue. However, the music eventually turns into something Novak likened to a dark dance on a thundering volcano. This was because he could not ignore the dire political situation with Nazi Germany threatening Czechoslovakia's very existence. The second movement, Lento doloroso, is a sad passacaglia. There is a sense of resignation, which Novak recalled was his feeling over lost youth as well as his fear of the future.. Another fine worthy of concert and the attention of amateur players.



Max d'Ollone (1875-1959) was born in the French town of Besançon and studied composition at the Paris Conservatory with Jules Massenet, winning the prestigious Prix d'Rome. He then pursued a career as a composer, conductor and teacher and eventually served as a professor at the Paris Conservatory. Most of his works are for the stage although he did not entirely ignore chamber music, composing this piano trio, a string quartet and some instrumental works.

His String Quartet in D Major was written in 1899, while he was in Rome. It is, surprisingly for French composer of this period that there is little if anything to identify the quartet with the impressionism of contemporaries such as Debussy and Ravel, but its chromaticism is reminiscent of César Franck. Instead, we hear the influence of his teacher Massenet and Saint Saëns, both of whom eschewed Impressionism. The opening movement, *Molto allegro*, is soft, gentle and genial but it has little in the way of drama or excitement. A nervous *Scherzo vivace* comes next. It is dominated more by its rhythm than its rather forgettable thematic material. Next is a sedate, rather sweet romantic *Adagio*. The finale, *The finale, Allegro*, is the most engaging of the four movements, but it, too, is dominated more by its rhythm than melody and the very busy accompaniment is by no means easy to pull off. Not for concert or home, in my opinion.



Franz Ondricek (1857-1922 František Ondříček in the Czech form) was born in Prague. He studied violin at the Prague and Paris Conservatories. He became one of the leading concert violinists of his time. He gave the first performance of the Violin Concerto by Antonín Dvořák, and his achievements were recognized by the rare award of honorary membership of the Philharmonic Society of London.

As well as being a highly regarded violinist, he was also a composer writing several works for violin and piano or orchestra as well as a string quartet. In addition to his career as a touring violin soloist, he founded and served as first violin in a string quartet which took his name. The Ondricek Quartet between the years of 1907 up until the start of the First World War was one of the best known quartet performing in Europe.

His String Quartet in A flat Major, Op.22 appeared in 1907. According to my research, the Ondricek performed it was performed in Austria and Germany several times, probably off of manuscript copies. The fact that it was not published until 1941 did nothing to help it gain traction or even get known to a wider public. The opening movement *Allegro moderato* has several appealing Czech melodies reminiscent of Dvorak. The second movement, *Allegro non troppo. Meno mosso*, is a scherzo again with Czech folk dance rhythms at the fore. An appealing *Adagio ma non troppo* comes next, The finale is in three sections begin as an *Andante* but rather than gain speed, it gets slower in a *Piu lento* section before the exciting *Allegro molto* conclusion. Not at all hard to play, it can definitely be recommended to amateurs who will enjoy it. If it were not for the fact that it entered the fray so later, I would recommend it for concert performance, but with so many of Dvorak's worthy quartets, not to mention those of Suk and Novak, rarely getting performed, I cannot in good conscience suggest that it be brought into the concert hall.

Perhaps no composer, more than **George Onslow** (1784-1853), illustrates the fickleness of fame. Onslow was born and lived his entire life in France, the son of an English father and French mother. His 36 string quartets and 34 string quintets were, during his own lifetime and up to the end of the 19th century, held in the highest regard, particularly in Germany, Austria and England where he was regularly placed in the front rank of composers. His



work was admired by both Beethoven and Schubert, the latter modeling his own 2 cello quintet (D.956) on those of Onslow and not, as is so often claimed, on those of Boccherini. Schumann, perhaps the foremost music critic during the first part of the 19th century, regarded Onslow's chamber music on a par with that of Mozart. Haydn and Beethoven. Mendelssohn was also of this opinion. Publishers

such as Breitkopf & Härtel and Kistner were among many which competed to bring out his works. Such was Onslow's reputation that he was elected to succeed Cherubini as Director of the prestigious Académie des Beaux-Arts, based on the excellence of his chamber music and this, in an "Opera Mad France", which had little regard for chamber music. However, after the First World War, his music, along with that of so many other fine composers, fell into oblivion and up until 1984, the bicentennial of his birth, he remained virtually unknown. Since then, his music, to the delight of players and listeners alike, is slowly being rediscovered, played and recorded. Onslow's writing was unique in that he was successfully able to merge the drama of the opera into the chamber music idiom perfected by the Vienna masters I have written the only book in English, *The String Quartets of George Onslow*, which discusses all of his string quartets and if you are interested, you can either read or download it at this online link: <http://www.editionsilvertrust.com/onslow-book.htm>. Thirty six string quartets may seem like quite a lot, certainly by the standards of the 19th century but not the 18th century where composers such as Haydn, Krommer, the Wranitzky brothers and several others all wrote more than 70. Another reason that Onslow concentrated on his quartets and quintets was the fact that they were incredibly popular and had made his name whereas his four symphonies and two operas were for all intents and purposes not well received. Like Haydn and Beethoven, Onslow wrote quartets throughout his entire life. Here in this Guide, I will limited myself to slight more than half of his thirty six quartets, but which will cover his entire active career as a composer. Those interested in his other quartets, which I do not discuss here, can read about them in my aforementioned book. Lastly, rather than commenting on the suitability of individual quartets for concert performance or amateurs, I will say that all of these works are worthy of concert performance and generally well within the ability of the average amateur ensemble. However, I will point out exceptions.

String Quartet No.1 in B flat Major, Op.4 No.1 is the first of a set of three composed in the summer of 1807, before he began his formal study of composition with Anton Reicha, which makes them a rather extraordinary achievement when one hears them. It begins with an *Allegro con brio* in 6/8 time. From the very start we hear a new voice. The melodic language is certainly not that of Haydn or Mozart. It opens in a bravura fashion, full of drama. The four voices are treated almost as equals. The second movement, *Andante sostenuto* is in 2/4. It sounds like an English or Scottish folk tune and is treated in a fashion which was to become a favorite of Onslow's; a theme and set of variations. A superb *Minuetto Allegro* follows, no longer the classical minuet but more in the order of scherzo. The part writing leaves nothing to be desired. A contrasting trio in minor, rather than releasing the tension of the minuet, instead is full of fire. It is often said that the Op.18 Quartets of Beethoven were light years ahead of nearly anything being written for the next 20 years. This quartet stands out as an exception to that statement. The Finale, *Allegro* is the kind of *moto perpetuo* of which Onslow showed himself to be a master. In 4/4, it is a rhythmically interesting movement with a dramatic and military flavor.

String Quartet No.4 in c minor, Op.8 No.1 dates from sometime between 1809 and 1814. Upon hearing the first few brooding measures of the introductory *Largo*, one is immediately impressed by the ideas, emotion and tonal resources available to

the composer. In both the Largo and the whirling Allegro agitato, itself a tour d' force, the cello is given a very strong, in many cases a leading, but not solo, role. This is an important, forward looking development. Other than Mozart's Prussian Quartets (K.575, 589 & 590), Haydn's Op.20 No.2 and Beethoven's Op.59 Quartets, there were no comparable examples available to Onslow when he wrote this work. The second movement, Adagio, begins as a dreamy pastoral song but the middle section features a stormy interlude, reminiscent of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony. The third movement, Minuetto Allegretto, combines a charming, Haydnesque minuet with a musette trio section. The opening theme to the finale, Presto, is a downward plunging passage of considerable force. The viola then begins a fugal development of the main theme. The second theme clearly conjures up the mood of Marchand's galloping La Chasse. The sound of this quartet is very original, it does not bring to mind the music of anyone else. This is one of his best from the early period.

String Quartet No.7 in g minor, Op.9 No.1 known by the subtitle God Save the King. It became one of the most famous and frequently performed quartets during the 19th century and was the first of a set of three, which collectively were known as the Lord Onslow Quartets named after his famous grandfather, a powerful English statesman and royal advisor, with whom he was quite close and after whom he had been named. Onslow began work on it immediately upon learning the of the death of grandfather in 1814. The Quartet opens with an explosive but not a stormy Allegro. It is the second movement, Andante religioso, a set of four variations on the national anthem of England, God Save the King, from which the Quartet takes its name. Onslow could quote the English national anthem without fear of censorship given the fact that in 1814, Napoleon had just been defeated by the Allies, most prominent of whom were the English. There can be little question that Onslow took the second movement of Haydn's Kaiserquartett (Emperor Quartet), Op.76 No.3, a similar set of variations on the then Austrian national anthem (Gott erhalte den Kaiser) as his model. This movement is the equal, if not actually superior, to Haydn's right down to the emotionally somber and organ-like setting of the theme. Of particular note is the last variation begins with a fugue that has some very advanced tonalities for the year 1814. This fugue begins softly but gradually rises to a crescendo of emotion before quietly breaking apart into a bridge section which returns to a powerful restatement of the theme. The third movement is a brilliantly haunting syncopated Menuetto with contrasting trio. The finale, Agitato, begins with an off-beat drum-like snarl, complete with slinky downward plunging chromatic passages and sudden and unanticipated accents. Another of my personal favorites and one of the very most deserving of concert performance.

String Quartet No.8 in a minor, Op.9 No.2 is the second of a set of three which were composed sometime between 1813 and 1815. The Op.9 quartets show important advances which were the result of his study with Anton Reicha at the Paris Conservatory. The Allegro vivace assai begins with a syncopated solo in the second violin. After two measures, the cello enters with a slowly rising, then falling chromatic theme in its lowest register. The music then takes off in a great rush, virtually tripping over itself with off-beat accents. This is vintage Onslow from his early period. A Minuetto presto is placed second. Though in 3/4, it features a canonic theme beginning on beat 2 but giving the feeling that it is beat one. The music, which moves along at quite a clip, does not really have a contrasting trio but the listener is hardly aware of this. An Andante non troppo lento comes next. In 6/8 and c minor, a doleful French folksong breaks forth. Several powerfully poignant duets between the first violin and cello follow before the fetchingly chromatic denouement. The finale to the quartet, Scherzo, Allegro, is quite effective.

String Quartet No.9 in f minor, Op.9 No.3 The opening movement is a melodramatic Moderato which immediately re-

minds one of Mendelssohn (who was barely five at the time this music was composed). The second theme is more energetic and filled with appealing chromaticism. The second movement is a haunting Menuetto. The opening theme, introduced by the solo viola and quickly taken up by the others, is clearly a hunt motif. The sound of horns can be heard in the distance. Onslow's biographer writes that it was meant to recall the many fox hunts Onslow had enjoyed on his grandfather's estates in England during his youth. The charming elf-like and very effective trio section is played quicker than minuet itself. This is followed by an Andante, a theme introduced by the cello and set of lovely variations. The finale, Allegro, is a veritable powerhouse, taking the listener's breath away from the very first measure and never letting go. This outstanding movement will bring the house down.

String Quartet No.10 in G Major, Op.10 No.1 is the first of a set of three composed between 1813-1815, the first of a set of three. The opening Allegro spiritoso begins with an unusual syncopated 'herky-jerky' dialog between the first violin and cello. Onslow seems to have been influenced by Beethoven's Op.18 Quartets which, at the time, were just becoming available in France. The themes seem to rely less on melody than on rhythm for their force. The very fine Adagio which comes next is based on a simple three note motif. The naturalness and ease with which Onslow develops this simplest of themes into a set of elaborate variations is astonishing. The Menuetto Allegro Risoluto is not so much a dance as a military parade march. The violins pound out an unrelenting three-step against a heavy running eights in the lower voices. In the trio section, we hear "hunting horns" playing a folk dance from the mountains of the Auvergne, Onslow's native province. In the finale, Allegretto ma non troppo lento, snippets of the theme are tossed from voice in a moto-perpetuo atmosphere.

String Quartet No.11 in d minor, Op.10 No.2 was composed between 1813-1815, the second of a set of three. The opening movement, Allegro Maestoso e espressivo, begins with a very dramatic violin solo over the pulsing 8ths of the three other voices. A minuet is placed second and the Auvergne air is placed not in the trio but the minuet itself. These Airs from the mountains of Auvergne clearly are robust and quick dances. The dance is followed by a contrasting trio considerably more gentle in nature. The following Andante con variazione is based on a sweet theme followed by a set of four very substantial variations. The first variation is a dialog between the all four voices. The second variation is uncomplicated this time in the relative minor. The third variation, in major, consists of a virtuosic challenge for the first violin. The fourth and final variation makes considerable use of elaborate syncopated cross rhythms. Clearly the center of gravity of the Quartet, this is a marvelous movement. The finale, Allegretto, in 6/8, is a genial and carefree romp. The middle section features a brief but interesting exchange of the second theme between the first violin and the cello.

String Quartet No.15 in E flat Major, Op.21 No.3 is the last of a set of three composed in 1822. The Quartet opens in quite a striking fashion, Allegro Maestoso, with the two lower voices presenting a theme of operatic drama. The theme is then picked up by the two violins and shortly after takes on a heroic, military element created by the drumming of repeated quarter notes in the lower voices. Onslow surprises by ending the movement pp after building to climatic ff. A Minuetto Allegro, instead of something slower, is placed second. The attractive opening theme is given to the viola as a solo. The trio is more or less a serenade based on a Ländler or Danse type theme. The masterly Larghetto in g minor which comes next is reminiscent of a Shepherd's Lament. The main theme is introduced by the cello. All of the voices then participate in the development. The middle section in G Major features a lovely interplay between the first violin and the cello in its tenor and treble registers. Absolutely first rate. In the finale, Allegro, quasi Allegretto scherzando, the violin takes off

in a hurried flight and is virtually given no rest whatsoever, even when the others join in on the way to a surprise finish.

String Quartet No.18 in D Major, Op.36 No.3 is the last of a set of three dating from 1828. The opening *Allegro vivace* begins with a jaunty, song-like tune played in a canon. No sooner do the lower voices finish the canon than the second theme bursts forth with tremendous forward energy. A very exciting movement. An *Andante non troppo lento* follows. This features a simple country melody which Onslow elegantly embellishes. The *Minuetto Allegretto* is a *scherzo par excellence*, of the sort for which Mendelssohn became famous. The catchy, syncopated first theme is developed with military modulations. The dazzling conclusion to this outstanding movement is the equal of the most famous *scherzos*. The light, buoyant *Finale, Presto* is yet another gem which strikes just the right touch. Another of my favorites and guaranteed to thrill an audience.

String Quartet No.19 in F# minor, Op.46 No.1 is the first of a set of three which were composed during the summer of 1831. Op.46 was dedicated to Monsieur Habeneck, in all likelihood the famous conductor who had done so much to popularize his work. Other than Beethoven's *Middle Quartets* no other contemporary quartet was tonally as advanced as Onslow's Op.46 No.1. The Op.46 Quartets enjoyed considerable popularity and were regularly performed in such premier places as Vienna, Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden throughout the 19th century. It is without doubt one of his very best. The opening movement, *Allegro espressivo e non troppo presto*, begins with a tragic and emotionally charged outcry of great power. It is played in unison and is one of the most striking openings of any Onslow quartet. It is then given to the cello to introduce the chromatic, and somewhat sinister, main theme. The second movement, *Menuetto-Allegro*, has a genial feel to it, not quite a *scherzo* though too quick for an old-fashioned minuet, it is nonetheless an impetuous dance. The beautifully contrasting trio, marked *dolce*, is based on a dreamy hunt-like theme. The following *Andante* is a typical example of Onslow's compositional brilliance. Taking what is a very gentle and pastoral theme, he writes a set of variations which explores every possible mood, including a military setting which is a *tour de force*. The superb finale, *Allegro moderato*, is quintessential Onslow: Drama, excitement, tuneful melodies, toe-tapping rhythms—it's all there. This is a masterwork.

String Quartet No.20 in F Major, Op.46 No.2 is the second of a set of three composed in 1831. The main theme of the genial opening movement, *Allegro*, is given to the cello as a brief solo before the others join in. In the second movement, *Andante sostenuto e semplice*, Onslow's use of *pizzicato* to present the melody against long sustained chords in the other voices is conceived and executed masterfully. First the cello is given the theme against the upper three voices, then the first violin against the lower three voices with the cello playing in its treble register. The *Menuetto vivace* which follows is certainly nothing that could be danced to, but it is a captivating *moto perpetuo*. The charming contrasting trio is reminiscent of the hunting theme from Rossini's *William Tell*. In the finale, *Allegro vivace e scherzo*, the drum-like rhythm of the opening theme serves to propel the music forward from start to rousing finish.

String Quartet No.21 in g minor, Op.46 No.3 is the last of this three set from 1831. The dramatic opening to the first movement, *Allegro non troppo vivo* immediately grabs the listener's attention. A series of powerful chords gives way to a low-pitched, soft, sinister, somewhat syncopated theme in the viola and cello. Onslow was particularly proud of the expressive second movement, *Adagio religioso*. The movement opens with a series of long chords sounding much like an organ. Slowly the music proceeds toward several effective dramatic climaxes. Later, the *pizzicato* triplet accompaniment in the cello against a long-lined melody in the other voices achieves a striking contrast. The sunny, carefree *Menuetto allegretto* is at times almost Haydnesque and

yet there is a certain something to it which places it later than the *Vienna Classics*. There is a very short trio in which one can hear storm clouds gathering from a distance. The finale, *Presto*, is characterized by incredible forward drive and excitement. The Op.46 Onslow was clearly in his prime.

String Quartet No.22 in C Major Op.47 was composed in 1834 and was an immediate success. It remained so throughout the 19th century, appearing on programs with the likes of Beethoven's Op.59, 74 & 95 and Haydn's Op.76, and judging from contemporaneous critical reviews, it did not come out second best. No less a personage than Robert Schumann, the editor of the most prestigious musical journal, the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, recognized Op.47's tremendous qualities. He found it modern, turbulent, full of pathos, variegated, exciting and mysterious. He went on to note that Onslow "did not owe the success of his music to Beethoven or Haydn, with whom he is often compared, but to himself. For he has developed the manner of his writing independently and thoroughly." Op.47 is unusual in that it does not have a real tonal center, but alternates between c minor and C Major. The opening movement begins in c minor with an *Introduzione-Lento*. From the first utterance of the nightmarish double-stops, which are interspersed with ghost-like broken-chord *pizzicato* in the cello, the listener senses that this is no ordinary quartet. One hears all of the power of Beethoven's Op.74 & 95 and then some. A tremendous sense of impending tragedy and doom hangs over these outbursts, which are clearly raised in defiance of some implacable fate. The main part of the movement, *Allegro*, is in C Major but is no less dramatic. The second movement, *Menuetto Allegro*, is really a *scherzo*. Played at breakneck speed, it is every bit as powerful and fine as the first movement. You are not going to find music more exciting than this. The trio, a marvelous viola solo, *sciolto e leggiero*, is every bit as good as the main section. In the lovely *Andante*, the cello's *pizzicato* gives out the first half of a classic folk tune to which the first violin replies with the rest. The very fine second theme is full of yearning. The finale, *Presto*, is reminiscent in feel and construction to the exciting last movement of Mozart's K.387 (it does not sound like Mozart) Now at last clearly in major, the thematic material is full of joy, buoyancy and happiness and generates tremendous excitement from its 'hell for leather' pace. There is even an exciting fugual section to boot. One of his best, an unquestionable masterwork and a personal favorite of mine.

String Quartet No.23 in A Major, Op.48 was completed in the summer of 1834 and published early in 1835. The first theme of the opening movement, *Allegro grazioso e moderato*, is gentle and genial. The charming second movement, *Andante*, is full of forward motion and more in the manner of brisk *intermezzo*. Of the *Scherzo presto* which comes next, it would be best to characterize it as "Seldom equaled, never surpassed." The cello and viola introduce the spooky, lop-sided, off beat opening theme. The trio section, is the slowest music of the quartet, and only a brief 16 measure interlude in this helter-skelter, amazing movement. The modern-sounding tonalities, for that time, clearly indicate Onslow was keeping abreast of, if not pioneering, developments. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, has a very exciting opening theme which is calmed by the introduction of the second subject, a series of chromatic passages. When the first theme is reintroduced, it is then followed by long running, virtuosic passages.

String Quartet No.25 in B flat Major, Op.50 was composed in 1834 and performed throughout Germany and Austria to great acclaim. Extant concert programs and subsequent newspaper reviews of these concerts showed that it was often presented on the same program with what are still today very well-known works, for example: Beethoven's Op.74, *The Harp*, Schubert's No & 14 *Death & the Maiden*, and the Mendelssohn Octet. Onslow's quartet generally received praise at least as great as that of its program mates. The opening theme to the first movement, *Allegro moderato*, has a concerto-like passage in the first violin.

The accompaniment in the other voices is made into another theme. A second subject, staccato e marcato, is a very effective military type march introduced by the cello. A marvelous Scherzo, vivace assai, comes next. The wonderful chromatic opening theme played in unison is deftly passed between the voices. The contrasting trio is a legato horn-like hunt theme, sounded in the distance à la Schubert, to pulsating eighth notes in the back ground. A gentle, graceful and lovely Andante grazioso follows. In the finale, Allegro vivace, Onslow's sense of the dramatic is at the fore.

String Quartet No.28 in E flat Major, Op.54 was composed during the summer and fall of 1835. It was dedicated to a Monsieur Gosselin, a string instrument maker then active in Paris. It is thought that Onslow owned one of Gosselin's cellos which were known for their excellent workmanship and tone. The first movement begins with a downwardly chromatic adagio Introduzione which like some soothsayer seems to give warning of impending doom. But Onslow surprises with a bright and lively Allegro moderato. This is a showy movement with a lot of forward motion. The second movement, Preghiera, Andante con variazione, begins with a lovely folk melody of child-like simplicity. There are five short variations on the theme which explore some aspect of the theme from a different perspective rather than merely providing a virtuosic interlude for this or that instrument. The final variation is particularly clever, featuring the melody by way of trill and ornament. The Scherzo, by its sheer élan, is the focal point for the entire quartet. The first violin introduces the exciting first subject and the whole movement takes off in a kind of perpetuo mobile. The thematic material is mostly split between the first violin and the cello with the middle voices providing a steady rhythmic tension. A rather dramatic trio section in which the lower voices break loose follows. Though brief, it provides a striking contrast to the main section. The finale, Allegro non troppo, is a cross between the virtuosic first theme and a Biedermeier-esque second theme.

String Quartet No.29 in d minor, Op.55 was composed in the autumn of 1835. The first movement, Allegro, is so rich in thematic material, wonderful melodies and original effects, that there is almost too much to be found in just one movement. It begins with an echo dialogue between the first violin and the viola and sounds a distant warning of danger. Rather than developing this promising subject, Onslow inserts a sudden downward bridge passage, leading immediately to the second theme, introduced by the cello high in its tenor register. Again without any real development, it leads to a dramatic third theme. The whole movement is pregnant with originality and excitement, including the very effective ppp ending in which the first theme surprisingly dies away. Next comes a magnificent Scherzo. presto. The theme is cut into snippets, divided between the voices. It is bright and full of energy. The second subject is just as exciting and as full of energy as the first. The trio, slightly slower than the preceding section, is a marvelous little stirring, military march-like melody: The captivating third movement is an impressive theme and set of variations Adagio cantabile. The theme, stated by the first violin, is reminiscent of a very beautiful Schubert lied. The first variation is a dramatic duet between the cello and first violin over tremolo in the middle voices. It sometimes happens that composers are able to use a particular effect in a most telling and almost unique way. Onslow's use of arpeggio-type passages is an example. The originality and effectiveness he was able to make of it is illustrated by the excitement generated from the opening theme, played by the first violin, in the finale, Allegro vivace. Each voice is entrusted with this theme at various points. The second subject provides an attractive contrast.

String Quartet No.30 in c minor, Op.56 written in 1836, can hold its own against anything written in the first half of the 19th century. This is clear from the very first measures of the opening allegro maestoso ed espressivo. There is nothing like them in the

entire quartet literature. The sheer drama of the cello solo (listen to our soundbite), as it ascends from the depths of the open c string to an A flat, nearly four octaves above it, is breathtaking. The first violin takes this up and starts to develop it, before introducing the gentler second theme, which rhythmically is cleverly stolen from the cadence of the first melody. The second movement is a very unusual Menuetto. Marked moderato, the lovely first theme is somewhat nostalgic and unhurried. The main theme of the trio section is equally fine and is similar in feel to the minuet. Against this, Onslow places an extraordinary background: long, running 16th note scale passages only in the cello. The third movement, Adagio cantabile e sostenuto, is written on a large scale, similar to what one encounters in one of Beethoven's Middle Quartets. The main theme is reminiscent of Schubert's very lovely songs. The gentleness of the music gives it an almost lullaby-like quality. Clearly, Onslow lavished much attention on it and as the movement closes, a quiet sense of peace descends upon the listener. And then—an explosion! Sudden, heart-stopping and powerful, the Finale, Vivace, springs forth without warning. The music is overflowing with wonderful melodies and original ideas and features an exciting and satisfying conclusion. This is one of his best, a masterwork and personal favorite. I must caution, however, the cellist must be of professional level technical ability.

String Quartet No.35 in D Major, Op.66 was completed in 1843 and achieved great popularity during Onslow's lifetime and throughout most of the 19th century. The opening movement begins with a slow, chromatically descending introduction, Adagio non troppo lento, which eventually leads to an Allegro moderato. The main theme, rhythmically-speaking, begins by fits and starts before it finally takes off. A whirlwind Scherzo follows, one of Onslow's very best. The wonderfully contrasting middle section is dramatic and operatic in nature. A doleful and moody Andante molto sostenuto stands in stark contrast to the high spirits of the preceding Scherzo. Onslow plumbs the depths of emotion here. The finale, Allegretto, grabs attention immediately with its chromatically, downward plunging opening phrase. The genial main theme moves at a brisk pace while rising to several dramatic heights along the way to a surprising coda.



Henrique Oswald (1852-1931) Oswald was born in Rio de Janeiro. His father was a Swiss-German, his mother Italian. Shortly after his birth his family moved to São Paulo. His mother taught music and he had his first lessons with her. Subsequently he studied at the Music Conservatory of Florence with Giuseppe Buonamici. He was active as a conductor and music director both in Europe and Brazil. He was a prolific

composer of chamber music: his list includes a violin sonata, 2 cello sonatas, 3 piano trios, 2 piano quartets a piano quintet, 4 string quartets and a string octet. I am not familiar with his first string quartet which went by the title Sonatina, Op.16

The **String Quartet No. 2 in e minor, Op. 17**, dates from the 1890s not long after he had studied in Florence. In four movements: Allegro agitato, Lento, Adagietto, Scherzo, Presto and Molto allegro. It was the most often performed of his quartets and went the title Quarteto Brasileiro but it sounds more Italian than Brazilian. Could be brought to concert and accessible to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3, Op.39 was composed in 1908 and dedicated to the Brazilian composer Francisco Braga. It is in three movements. It opens with a big Italian sounding Allegro agitato, which does not sound all that agitated. Generally tuneful but after a while because it goes on too long, rather monotonous. The Andante con moto which follows is nicely done. The finale, Allegro moderato has thematic material, rather like the first movement which really does not stick with one. Requires good amateurs but

I would not bring it into the concert hall.

String Quartet No.4 in c minor, Op.46 dates from 1921 when Oswald was 69 years old. Supposedly a synthesis of his entire chamber music production according to his biographer. It is in three movements: Allegro moderato, Adagio, and Allegro molto and considerably more modern sounding than his earlier works. Of the three movements, the Adagio makes the strongest impression. The first movement opens with a highly emotional principal theme stated by the violin alone. This theme provides material for most of the material for the entire quartet. The Adagio opens with a series of chords, and it is only when the violin enters with its theme that the tonal grounding is established. The finale is upbeat and short, In fact, the entire quartet is not very long. The music is cyclic in character recalling the principal theme of the first movement in its original form. Less approachable than No.3.



Frederick Ouseley (1825-1889) was born in London into a minor noble family, his father was a baronet. It is reported that he was a child prodigy who composed a complete opera at the age of 8. He took a divinity degree at Oxford at entered the ministry.

Though drawn to music, it was, at the time, thought unseemly for an English nobleman to be a composer. However, his strong love of

music eventually led him back to Oxford where he studied for and received a bachelor's and doctor's degree in music. He subsequently became Professor of Music at Oxford and divided his time between teaching music and working as vicar. Most of his compositions were for the church. But he did compose at least two string quartets.

His **String Quartet No.1 in d minor** was published in 1868 but mostly likely composed several years earlier. Musical tastes at the time in Victorian England were rather conservative with Mendelssohn dominating musical thought. Ouseley's own musical taste was also rather conservative and his quartet harks back to the early romantic and late classical eras. Nonetheless, it is very well written with appealing melodies and good part-writing. The opening movement begins with a brief Adagio introduction which leads to the main section Allegro moderato in which each of the instruments is given a chance to develop the thematic material. The charming second movement, Andante cantabile, has the aura of a folk melody. A typical Scherzo vivace with a country dance-like trio section serves as the third movement. The finale, Rondo allegro, is a light-hearted romp. No one would pretend this is a great masterwork, however, it historically important because very little English chamber music from the early and mid Victorian era is known or has survived. Further, the fact it is so nicely written with appealing melodies and solos for all makes this a fine choice for amateur quartets looking for a performance work. Even better yet, it presents no technical difficulties.

This is not the case for his **String Quartet No.2 in C Major** which does require players of a higher technical caliber and as such is not worth the effort.



Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) is generally considered the most famous and perhaps best violinist who ever lived. He was born in the Italian city of Genoa. And while his violin concertos and other works for violin are justly famous, his four string quartets are virtually unknown. Also unknown is the fact that Paganini liked to play string quartets, especially those of Haydn and early Bee-

thoven. It is said that when visiting Vienna, he even played quartets with one of Vienna's leading quartet violinists, Joseph

Mayseder. He wrote at least four string quartets. On the manuscript to the first three of the first three, Paganini wrote, Op.1, Three Quartets dedicated to His Majesty King of Sardinia and Duke of Genoa to whom they were presented, probably in 1815. It is not known if the king ever saw them and they were soon forgotten by Paganini who did not try to get them published, and subsequently assigning Op.1 to his violin caprices. The quartets remained unpublished until a critical edition based on the manuscript was produced by Federico Mompellio in 1976. Players expecting the fireworks found in his violin concerti will be disappointed. While his gift for writing lovely melodies is amply on display, these quartets were meant to be played, as was the case at the time of their composition, in the homes of upper class amateur players. They were designed for home music making and not the concert stage.

This said it should be noted that in all three of these works that is **String Quartet No.1 in d minor, String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major and String Quartet No.3 in a minor**, virtually all, and I do mean all, of the melodic material is found in the first violin part. This may due to the fact that Paganini was familiar with the quartets of the French violin virtuosos such as Pierre Rode and Rodolfo Kreutzer. To some extent they resemble Spohr's Quartet Brillants which were designed by Spohr when touring to played in small towns where there was no orchestra suitable for performing a concerto. Usually another violinist, violist and cellist of average ability could be found and so the work took on the appearance of a concerto in miniature so to speak. In any event, though filled with many beautiful melodies, I cannot recommend you spend your time with these, unless your group has a violinist who wishes to show off his or her abilities while the others merely accompany.

The fourth quartet and the only one I can recommend is his **Grand Quartet in E Major**. And this work did not start out life as a string quartet at all, but rather was the seventh of Paganini's quartets for violin, viola, cello and guitar. It was composed in 1818 and given at a concert at which the famous violin virtuoso Karel Lipinski played violin and Paganini played the guitar. After that, it disappeared and was not published, unlike most of his other 15 guitar quartets, until the mid 20th century. Strangely, it was only known as a string quartet, which Paganini himself had arranged. It was published in Leipzig in 1831 and in Paris about the same time. Given that the other three quartets remained unknown, this work was generally considered the only quartet he wrote. The first six guitar quartets were written for amateurs, however, the seventh was written for professionals and a top notch violinist. The work is written in concertante style with one voice playing the melody over a simple accompaniment. As in the earlier string quartets and as in most of the guitar quartets most of the melodic material is given to the first violin. However, in the first movement, Allegro moderato, the cello and viola are given lengthy solos and in the Minuetto with its three trios, the second violin is given a chance in the second trio. This minuet is unusual in that the melody is played entirely pizzicato as if played by guitars, while the trios are bowed melodies. The finale, features virtuoso requirements for the first violin such as thrown spiccato. That said, Paganini probably knew what he was doing by arranging this guitar quartet for string quartet. Certainly it was likely to get a bigger market share. Anyway, as an oddity, it could be presented in concert, or perhaps just the first movement. As for home, if you violinist and cellist are of very good technical ability, then why not.

Désiré Pâque (1867-1939) was born in the Belgian city of Liege. He studied at the conservatory there from 1882 to 1889 at the Royal Conservatory of Liège, where he won the first prizes for organ, piano and harmony. He was subsequently appointed professor of music theory in the same conservatory, where he remained for several years after which he taught in Athens



and Lisbon before moving to Paris.. His style changed during the course of his life starting out showing the influence of the French Impressionists and eventually moving toward a kind of atonalism. He wrote four string quartets. I am not familiar with the first two.

String Quartet No.3 was composed in 1897 while he was in Sofia. Already, he had abandoned traditional tonality but the work was not

strictly a tonal as each of the movements, a quiet and mysterious Moderato allegro, a nervous Allegrissimo sounding of the Impressionists, and serving as the scherzo of quartet, a very mysterious Lentissimo, and an Allegro appassionato which wildly careens through several chromatic episodes. This quartet gets more interesting as it goes along. Recommended for concert and good amateur players.

String Quartet No.4 dates from 1899 was composed in Brussels and was subtitled *Quasi una fantasia*. The very short opening movement, Allegro, full of forward motion certainly gives off that impression. with its several moods. The second movement, Aria, is rather lovely and seems to have roots tracing back to the Baroque era. The Minuetto which comes next is rather sedate and not very minuet-esque, pleasant but unremarkable. The finale, Fantasia, begins exactly like the first movement. It is as long as the first three movements, which are not terribly long in any event. What starts out as much forward motion suddenly is becalmed and then reenters. All sorts of technical tricks, from tremolo to cadenzas are employed to keep the listener's attention. They work, but there is a certain lack of unity to the whole thing. This said, I must admit it is a very interesting and unusual movement. Overall An interesting work which has a kind of neo baroque feel. Perhaps it justifies an occasional concert performance and can be recommended to amateurs as it does not present, except in cadenzas any real technical difficulties.



Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918) was born in Bournemouth, England. He received some lessons on the piano as a youth but did not formally study it. He was educated Eton and Oxford and though he showed an extraordinary aptitude for music, he took a degree in law and modern history as his father wanted him to have a career in commerce. From 1870 to 1877 he worked in the insurance industry, but he continued his musical

studies, first with from William Sterndale Bennett, and later with the pianist Edward Dannreuther when Brahms proved to be unavailable. After leaving the insurance industry, Parry became a full-time musician and during the last decades of the 19th century was widely regarded as England's finest composer. In the 1890s he became director of the Royal College of Music and was appointed Professor of Music at Oxford. He helped establish classical music at the center of English cultural life. As head of the Royal College of Music, his pupils included Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Frank Bridge and John Ireland. His music shows the influence of Bach and Brahms, Parry was the first English composer whose development could be traced to the concert practice of chamber music. Most of his chamber music was written during the first part of his life and remained unpublished until well into the 20th century. He wrote three string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor dates from 1868, while he was at Oxford. It is in three movements and shows the influence of Mendelssohn. The work opens with a lively and appealing Allegro con fuoco. The middle movement, Andante, has a religious and sedate quality. The quartet concludes with an upbeat bustling Allegro vivace. Basically a happy work that does not plumb any emotional depths. It is well written, not hard to play and recommended to amateurs. Probably not for concert.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major was composed shortly after he finished the first quartet. In four movements, it begins with a substantial, dark hued Larghetto introduction in the minor, very effective and promising an exciting main section, but the Allegro di molto which follows is bright, joyful and happy and bears no relation whatsoever to what has come before. Okay but not great. An Andante espressivo follows, sweet and languid but forgettable. Next is a Scherzo allegro, Mendelssohnian and pretty nicely done. The finale, Vivace, is cheerful with lots of forward motion but not very memorable or effective. Weaker than his first effort in my opinion. Not for concert, perhaps for amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in G Major was composed in 1878. During the 10 years that separated this work from his earlier efforts, Parry had studied with Eduard Dannreuther, a virtuoso pianist soloist and composition teacher active in London, who was a champion of composers such as Liszt, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky. Yet Parry's music does not sound all that different. The opening Allegro wanders about and the thematic material is weak. The Andante which serves as the second movement, is considerably better. It has the quality of a slow intermezzo and is quite good. Third is an Allegro, an ominous sounding scherzo. Again, very good. The finale, Allegro moderato, seems to have the same problems as the opening movement. It is hard to get a grasp on the thematic material which again wanders, devoid of drama and leading to no climax. I cannot recommend the work for concert or home, a pity since the middle movements are really very good.



Dora Pejačević (1885-1923 until recently spelled Pejacevich) was born in Budapest, the daughter of an important Croatian aristocrat. Her mother had been a pianist. She studied piano and violin locally before attending various conservatories. At the Munich Conservatory she studied composition with Walter Courvoisier and violin with Henri Petri, although it has been said that she was mostly self-taught. Today, she is considered one Croatia's most important 20th century composers and many of her works, during her lifetime, enjoyed considerable success and were performed throughout Germany, Austria, Hungary and the rest of the Habsburg Empire. She wrote one string quartet.

Her **String Quartet in C Major**, Op.58 was composed in 1922, the year before her death. It opens with an Allegro in which the cello gives out the main theme. The writing is post-Brahmsian and though tonal, flirts very gently with dissonance. The writing is akin to those composers from this era like Hans Gal and Karl Weigl who chose to not follow Schoenberg and the Second Vienna School. More modern than Dohnanyi, one hears the influence of Reger. The Adagio which follows is somewhat polytonal and yearning. The third movement, Minuetto, allegretto, opens with a few pizzicato chords. What follows is a very modern sounding minuet with long lined melodies in the lower voices while the uppers create the rhythm. Lots of chromaticism, very interesting. The finale, Rondo allegro, seems the least coherent and lacks any real excitement or drama which one comes to expect in a finale and it goes on for rather too long. While there are many clever parts, I do not find the whole justifying concert performance or the time of amateurs.



Richard von Perger (1854-1911) was born in the Austrian city of Graz. He studied composition in Vienna with several teachers, including Brahms, whose influence can often be felt in his music. His career was divided between composing, conducting and teaching. He served as director of the Rotterdam Conservatory and later the Vienna Conservatory as well

as the Wiener Singverein (Vienna Choral Society) and the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. His chamber music was held in high regard. He composed three string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.8 dates from 1885 and was published the following year. It was dedicated to his friend and teacher Johannes Brahms, and one can be sure that Brahms would not have accepted the dedication if he had not thought the work worthy of his name. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, poco piu tranquillo, has a searching quality and a sense of yearning. It is followed by an upbeat, canonic fugue. The second movement, Allegro giocoso, is a bouncing, raucous scherzo with a wistful middle section which provides excellent contrast. The Andante con moto, ma tranquillo, which comes next, is a theme and set of four interesting variations. The finale, Vivace non troppo, begins with a bang, two loud chords, before it takes off on an exciting romp. This quartet exhibits the compositional mastery that Perger had at his command. Within the framework of the mid-late Romantic era, one hears that the ideas are not only original to the composer but also executed in an assured manner. Public performance would be a certain success and the quartet is well within the reach of amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in B flat Major, Op.11 dates from 1887. The opening Vivace non troppo, ma con brio, begins with a powerful and fetching theme. The second movement, Andantino con moto, is a veritable river of melody. An original and inspired Presto with trio comes next which is then followed by an Allegro moderato which is particularly interesting in its construction. A good quartet, although the melodic material is not quite as impressive as in the First Quartet. Still it could be brought to concert and recommended to experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in A Major, Op.15 was completed in 1889 and dedicated to the famous violinist Joseph Joachim. The opening Allegro molto moderato is genial. It takes a while to get going. Certainly shows the influence of Brahms. A Presto is second. It, too, is upbeat and pleasant. Third is an Adagio non troppo that is calm and reflective and fugal in parts but no theme is particularly memorable. The finale, Vivace, bustles along full of forward motion. I do not think the thematic material matches that of the first quartet. It can be recommended to amateurs.



Lorenzo Perosi (1872-1956) was born in the Piedmontese town of Tortona. He hailed from a long line of church musicians. His first lessons were from his father one of Italy's most prominent church musicians. Subsequently, he studied at the Milan Conservatory and immediately after became an ordained priest. By the age of 20, he had obtained world-wide fame as a composer of sacred music. He held a series of high musical posts within the church, culminating in his appointment as Maestro Perpetuo della Cappella Sistina, or Perpetual Director of the Sistine Choir in Rome, a position he held for nearly 50 years. His fame for his masses and other sacred music was such that few knew that he also composed instrumental music, including three string trios, sixteen string quartets, three string quintets, four piano quintets, and several sonatas and suites for various instruments. Perosi made no great effort to promote his chamber music and to have it performed and very few pieces were published perhaps because he did not feel it appropriate for a man of the cloth to write secular music or perhaps he felt it might detract from his reputation as a composer of sacred music. The net result was that it fell into oblivion, much of it without having ever received any attention whatsoever. What is interesting is that virtually all of Perosi's chamber music was composed within a three year period—1928 and 1931. It has been suggested that Perosi who periodically suffered from psychological and neurological problems retreated into writing instrumental music during this period because of these difficulties. I have heard most of his six-

teen string quartets on CD. Most sound quite similar, many are interesting, and some are worthwhile and should be played, however, it is virtually impossible to obtain the music, except to the one quartet I have played and which is available from Edition Silvertrust. It is quite possibly his best based on the strength of the lovely melodic material in it.

String Quartet No.3 in G Major is one of eight!! string quartets that Perosi composed during 1928. Such feverous work, some scholars believe, was a therapeutic attempt to rid himself of the severe depression from which he was suffering. It is in three movements. The sunny opening movement, Allegro, opens with a optimistic, heroic theme first given out by the cello over a pulsing accompaniment. A tonally more advanced and diffident second theme follows. The middle movement, Adagio, begins softly with pizzicato. The violin then introduces the first phrase of a very vocal melody. The other voices sing a refrain and the theme is developed but always over a soft, insistent pizzicato. Gradually, sadness and uncertainty creep in. An aura of melancholy hangs over the proceedings. The finale, Vivo, quickly dispels this mood. Over pulsing triplets, the violin introduces an heroic but also sunny, lyrical theme of triumph which is reminiscent of the opening movement. This is a good quartet which could be brought into the concert hall and can be recommended to amateurs. The same cannot be said for all of the other fifteen.

Very little information is available about **Johann Persiany** (1879-19??). It has been impossible to determine where he was born. From his first name, one can conclude that he was an ethnic German, perhaps but not necessarily, one of the many Baltic Germans serving in the Russian government. That Persiany did so is one of the few facts which is known about him. Although he studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory under Anton Liadov and Rimsky-Korsakov, and published a small number of works, which were held in high regard, shortly after graduating, he chose to pursue a career as a diplomat and apparently composed very little thereafter. His String Quartet is the only work of his known outside of Russia.

String Quartet in A Major, Op.1 It was brought out by the famous Russian music publisher Belaiev in Leipzig in 1906 and is dedicated to his teacher Liadov. In four movements, it exhibits most of the characteristics—charm, appealing melodies, use of Russian themes of the so-called Belaiev Circle which consisted of Korsakov's many students such as Glazunov, Borodin and Liadov. It begins with a short introduction, Andante. The main part of the first movement, Allegro moderato, has for its first subject a fine melody which is then followed by a charming, lyrical second theme. The deeply felt second movement, Adagio, has a noble main theme and a tuneful middle section. A piquant Scherzo comes next, with a somewhat sad, contrasting trio. The powerful finale, Allegro even has an effective fugue within. The entire quartet is praiseworthy and recommended to amateur players.



Guido Peters (1866-1937) was born in the Austrian city of Graz. He studied piano and composition at the Vienna Conservatory after which he pursued a dual career as a pianist and composer. In 1926, he obtained a professorship at the Vienna Conservatory. He composed in most genres and his works, mostly written in the late romantic idiom, enjoyed considerable success during the first three decades of the 20th century. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major was completed in 1902. The opening movement In ruhiger Bewegung is not as calm as the movement title suggests. The thematic material is rather porous and difficult to follow. The second movement Rasch, starts out quickly but almost immediately slows down to a lugubrious pace. Then the fast part quickly resurfaces and then sinks again rather

like bubbles coming to the top of boiling porridge. The finale two movements *Sehr langsam und gemessen* and *Allegretto* are played without stop. *Sehr langsam* is indeed slow and somewhat funereal. Very atmospheric and effective. The *Allegretto*, when it finally appears, has an appealing main theme, perhaps a touch Hungarian. Keeping things together is not always easy, but it can still be warmly recommended to experienced ensemble players.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor was finished in 1910. The first movement, *Allegro con brio, poco patetico*, has a dramatic and highly effective main theme which is full of passion. Still more striking is the lyrical second subject. The following, deeply felt *Andante sostenuto* has the character of a lament but there is also lighter middle section. This is a very poetic movement. The third movement, *Sehr rasch und deutlich*, is a spirited scherzo, which along the way, in a muted section, becomes highly atmospheric. There is also a contrasting trio with a lovely melody. The finale begins with a recitative introduction, *Sostenuto*, in which the main theme appears again, but this time in the major. The main section, *Allegro con brio* is both tonally attractive finely written. This quartet should be given concert performance and can also be recommended to good amateurs.



Hans Pfitzner (1869–1949) was born in Moscow of German parents. His father was a professional violinist and he received violin lessons from his father. Later he studied piano and composition at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt. He enjoyed a long career as a conductor and teacher. His music was held in high regard by contemporaries such as Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler. Pfitzner was an avowed opponent of the Second Vienna School with its serialism and atonal music. Instead, he sought new paths for traditional tonality. He composed in nearly every genre and is best known for his operas. He did not ignore chamber music, writing four string quartets, two piano trios and a piano quintet.

String Quartet in d minor was composed in 1886 as the result of a competition which Pfitzner entered for a scholarship to attend the Frankfurt Conservatory. The judges included Max Bruch and Felix Mottl. Pfitzner did not win the scholarship and shortly thereafter, the manuscript went missing. As late as 1938, Pfitzner believed the work would never be found. But sometime in the 1960s the manuscript was found and it was published. However, by this time, the musical world thought there were only three quartets and his second quartet, became known as No.1 and this earlier work remained only *Quartet in d minor*. In four movements, the opening *Allegro molto moderato* has a very fetching main theme which Pfitzner takes through many motions, showing the influence of Bruckner and Wagner, very impressive. The second movement is a gorgeous *Allegro ma non troppo*, which is a kind of scherzo. First rate. An *Andante molto sostenuto* follows. It is a somewhat sad song without words. The finale, *Allegro*, has a march for the main theme. It opens in the major and the mood is triumphant. It is hard to understand how Pfitzner did not win that scholarship for this is a Romantic era masterpiece, and written by a 17 year old no less. A certain success in concert and a work in which amateurs will revel as it presents no difficulties.

Seventeen years were to pass before Pfitzner tried his hand at writing another string quartet. Musically, much had happened in those years and of course he was now 34 so it is not unexpected that the **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.13** which was composed in 1903 sounds nothing like his earlier effort. It was highly praised at its premiere. It is a work noteworthy not only for its extraordinary use of counterpoint but also for its architecture. The first movement, *In mäßig gehender Bewegung* (he now stuck to German rather than Italian tempo markings for the most part), has a constantly shifting tonal base, while its main theme is a relaxed legato melody, the second theme is more energetic and rhythmic. The second movement, *Kräftig mit humor* is a scherzo

with three themes. The viola and the second violin have a playful dialogue. A second theme has a teasing quality, while the third is altogether happier. Next comes a slow movement, *Sehr langsam*. Its linear counterpoint and harmony are very clever, while the main theme has a song-like lyricism. The finale, *In heiteren Reigentempo, quasi Andantino*, has three themes, each delightful and bright. Good enough for concert and home.

String Quartet No.2 in c sharp minor, Op.36 appeared in 1925. The first movement, *Ziemlich ruhig*, is pretty much that—calm, and yet there is an undercurrent of unrest. Tonally very advanced. The second movement, *Sehr schnell*, serves as a scherzo. Tonally somewhat more conservative than the preceding movement, except the intrusion of rather jarring dissonant chords. The slow movement, *Langsam, ausdrucksvoll* is slow but not particularly expressive. The overall mood is of entering a room in a nursing home where someone has recently died and the odor or the corpse lingers in the air. The finale, *Ziemlich schnell*, is harsh and unpleasant with many thrashing dissonant chords sprinkled throughout. Pfitzner may have been looking for a way to avoid being atonal which the quartet does but it is hardly more pleasant to hear and very difficult to play. I cannot see that it would be an enjoyable concert hall audiences nor for amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in c minor, Op.50 came out in 1942. It has a sad and downtrodden introduction leading to an *Andante* main section. The tonality here is traditional. Pfitzner who was in his 70s might well have been influenced by the fact that Germany was in the middle of a war it was starting to lose. But the *Andantino* which follows dispels this idea. It is a playful tune in a child-like setting. It, too, is tonally more conservative than the prior quartet. The third movement, *Langsam*, is a quiet plaint, sad but not overly so. The finale is a good natured *Allegro*. This quartet could have been written forty years earlier. It is unquestionably a look backward. A work I can recommend to amateurs as it is not hard to play. A decent work, but hardly the stuff of concerts.



The Bohemian composer, though born Vaclav in the town of Bechyně in the Bohemian Kingdom of the Austrian Habsburg Empire, spent most of his life working for the Hapsburgs and was known during his lifetime as **Wenzel Pichl** (1741-1807). He was a virtuoso violinist who along with Dittersdorf and the Wranitzky brothers, founded the Viennese School of violin playing. On personal terms with Mozart and

Haydn, he became first violinist of the Vienna court theatre and on the recommendation of the Empress Maria Theresa, he became music director for the Austrian governor Lombardy at Milan in 1777 and remained there until 1796. He was a prolific composer of over 900 works, most of which were at one time published but, with the exception of a handful of pieces, remain out of print. Chamber music was one of Pichl's abiding interests and he is known to have composed some 18 string quartets and 45 string trios. A performing musician to the bitter end, Pichl is said to have died "with his boots on" in that he collapsed and died on stage while performing a concerto at the Vienna. I am by no means familiar with all 18 of his string quartets. I have, however, played two. **Op.2 No.4 in G Major and Quartet in A Major, WoO**. They are on a par with the quartets of Dittersdorf and some of the brothers Wranitzky quartets. They were written in the late 1770s and 1780s. The first violin, of course, gets most of the action but the other parts are not entirely ignored. They are tuneful and worthwhile and certainly worth playing if you get a chance.,

Riccardo Pick-Mangiagalli (1882-1949) was born in the town of Strakonice, today in the Czech Republic but at the time of his birth part of the Austrian Empire. His father was Czech, his



mother Italian. He studied piano and composition at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan and then continued his studies in Prague and later in Vienna with Richard Strauss. He initially pursued a career as a concert pianist, but later devoted himself entirely to composition and teaching, eventually becoming director of the Milan Conservatory. Not surprisingly, given his background and education, his music is cosmopolitan combining

various influences including late Viennese Romanticism with elements of French Impressionism.

His **String Quartet in g minor, Op.18** was composed in 1909 and is in three movement, each subtitled. The huge first movement, Nocturne, has several sections. It begins as a very moody and subdued night piece, with the strings playing muted. Livelier sections follow before the work closes in the mood with which it began. The beautiful middle movement, Andantino, quasi allegretto, he subtitled Arietta, a little aria, however, it is of normal length. The seductive melodies are quite captivating. The finale, Molto allegro, is entitled Epilogue. It is the most Italian sounding of the movements, a powerful and forward thrusting affair, which is interspersed with several lyrical sections. It is a first rate, fresh-sounding early modern quartet which deserves concert performance but also belongs on the stands of amateurs.



Willem Pijper (1894-1947) was born in Dutch town of Zeist and receiving his first musical training from his father, an amateur violinist. He studied composition with the Dutch composer Johan Wagenaar. He composed five string quartets which span his creative career--indeed the last quartet was left unfinished at his death.

String Quartet No.1 was composed in 1924 while he was studying with Wagenaar.

It is written in the late Romantic idiom. In four movements, The opening Allegro moderato bursts off with a very dramatic theme played over a tremolo accompaniment. Eventually a second theme, no less dramatic but somewhat more lyrical. The Scherzo comodo which follows is muted. The theme is played over pizzicato. More of an intermezzo than a scherzo, there is a veiled quality to the music. In third place is a Largo which begins orchestrally, until the main subject appears and is introduced in canonical fashion. It sounds vaguely like a Hebraic melody from the Baroque era. The finale, Poco agitato, is just that, exciting and full of forward motion. The quartet does not sound like a student work and has enough original touches to justify the occasional concert performance.

By the time Pijper came to write his **String Quartet No.2** in 1920, he had moved quite a distance tonally and this and all subsequent quartets sound nothing like No.1. These are introspective works, subdued in spirit, and make much use of wending, melodic lines of a contemplative nature. Effects are almost nonexistent, even pizzicato being used sparingly. All of the quartets are short. It is the earliest in which he utilized his so-called germ cell technique. In this work he demonstrates a contrapuntal handling of this technique. In the first of the two movements, Molto moderato, the three themes are introduced in the cello, viola and second violin nearly simultaneously. He uses polyrhythms: at one point the violins are playing in 4/4 meter, the viola in 3/4 and the cello in 5/4. Surprisingly, the effect is not one of harshness, but of a yearning, reflective spirit. The second movement, Adagio, though short, contains a scherzo and an andante molto moderato quasi adagio. The work closes with a serene epilog. It is interesting and original in conception. As such it could be performed in concert, the downside being there is little or no drama or excitement to be heard. Not beyond amateurs except for counting.

String Quartet No. 3 of 1923 is cast in three short movements. All of the basic material used is derived from the three-measure germ cell which functions as an introduction. This is followed by a brief Andantino, which leads without interruption into the second movement, a Scherzando. This movement is much more contrapuntal than the rest of the quartet, and utilizes Spanish-influenced rhythms. The third movement, Molto tranquillo, opens with a variant of the germ cell, followed by reference to the Spanish rhythm of the second movement. I found this movement rather boring for quite a while until it finally got going after which it got very interesting. Hardly spectacular but an interesting and original alternative to the atonal works of the Second Vienna School.

String Quartet No.4 of 1928 is cast in four movements. The opening Andante molto moderato is characterized by metrical shifts (4/4, 7/8, 5/8, etc.) It sounds like someone has died and the body has already been removed from where that happened. The rest sounds much the same. I cannot justify spending time with it.



The American composer **Walter Piston** (1894-1976) was born in Rockland, Maine. He was studied music at Harvard University and is one of the better known American composers of the 20th century. He espoused his own version of the 12 tone system and while I wrote that this guide would not discuss the works of atonal composers. I have decided to include an entry here because I feel that Piston's handling of his

material in most of his five string quartets is actually quite interesting, appealing and worthwhile.

In particular I can recommend his **String Quartet No.1** of 1933. The angular first movement, Allegro, is percussive and dominated for the most part by its rhythm. The middle movement Adagio is quiet and mysterious. The finale, Allegro vivace, is nervous, frenetic but not abrasive. Worth hearing in concert.

Cannot say the same for **String Quartet No.2** from 1935. And only the last movement of **String Quartet No.3** of 1947 I found interesting.

However **String Quartet No.4** of 1951 is better from its smooth Souve to the Adagio and the clever Leggiero vivace. This could be programmed, but only amateurs of professional standard will make it sound decent.

String Quartet No.5 of 1962 does not rise to the level as far as interest and appeal as Nos.1 and 4.



Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968) was born in the Italian city of Parma. His father was a pianist with whom he first studied before entering the conservatory in Parma. He worked as a composer and music critic. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major dates from 1906. The opening movement Vivace ma sereno is genial bright with a series of cascading chords. The melody continually played over a chordal accompaniment. There is a lot of forward motion. Original and captivating. The main theme of the second movement, Adagio, sounds like a New England church anthem of the sort one sometimes hears in George Chadwick and Charles Ives. This theme never disappears and is treated, not in variation format but developed and redeveloped through many transmogrifications. The finale, Tema et variazione. Composers who have closed with this format, such as Schubert and Beethoven, have had mixed results, sometimes successful, other times not. Pizzetti's effort must be considered successful. The variations—Canzone: Allegretto tranquillo - Ritmo di danza - Ninna nanna per la mia piccina - Ritmo di danza - Movimento iniziale del Tema, ma un poco più lento) IV. Finale: Vivo - Sereno— are varied and clever. I only wish the quartet did not end quietly. That said this is a first rate quartet

deserving concert performance where it is sure to be well received and it can be managed by experience amateurs. If there is any knock it, it is that it is that it often borders on the orchestral.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major appeared in 1933. The *Molto sostenuto* which opens the work creates a down-trodden, glum atmosphere. The second subject is more lyrical and upbeat. Its appearance, as it develops, is orchestral. One feels that it could just as easily have suited a string orchestra. Overall, an interesting movement, which as it proceeds sounds rather similar to the technique of his first quartet. Toward the end both the drum beat rhythm and melody give the music a vaguely military feel, but this does not last too long and the close is rather gentle. The second movement, *Adagio*, does not make a lasting impression as the thematic material seems rather amorphous, lugubrious and shapeless. The *Movimento di Scherzo* which follows starts off sounding like a clock which is being wound up before it gets going. Again the scoring is very dense creating an orchestral sound. There is a nervous edgy, almost frenetic quality to the music but in the end it is a lot of noise and fury signifying very little because the thematic material is not compelling. The finale, *Molto concitato*, has a powerful, almost violent, again orchestral opening. Lots of forward motion, lots of noise but in the end I do not think it is very convincing. I cannot see this quartet making any lasting dent in concert and cannot recommend it to amateurs.



"No composer ever created more of a craze than Pleyel. He enjoyed a universal reputation and dominated the field of instrumental music for more than twenty years. There was no amateur or professional musician who did not delight in his genius." So wrote F.J. Fetis one the leading, if not the leading music critic of his time. **Ignaz**

Pleyel (1757-1831) was born in the Austrian town of Ruppersthal. He began his studies with Jan Baptist Vanhal and then with Haydn, who, along with Mozart, considered Pleyel extraordinarily talented. Mozart is said to have called Pleyel the "next Haydn" and Haydn saw to it that his star pupil's works, primarily chamber music, were published. Pleyel's reputation quickly spread and he obtained the position of Kapellmeister (Music Director) at one of Hungary's leading courts. Later he moved to Strasbourg where he worked with Franz Xaver Richter and settled there. During the French Revolution, he moved to London but later returned to France and became a French citizen. In 1795, he founded a publishing firm which bore his name. It became one of the most important in France, publishing the works of Beethoven, Hummel, Boccherini, Onslow, Clementi, Dussek and many others. In addition he founded a famous piano manufacturing company which also bears his name. Pleyel and his music were quite famous during his lifetime. In England, for a time, his music was even more popular than that of Haydn. This was probably due to the fact that his quartets were easier to play from an ensemble standpoint than those of Haydn. He wrote a prodigious amount of music, including at least 70 string quartets, most of which were composed between 1783 and 1792. Having played at least twenty or so, I can say with some authority that his quartets are uneven in quality, but this should come as no surprise. Not all of Haydn's 83 quartets are first rate either. Some are quite good, others ordinary. The thematic material of some can only be found in the first violin part, in others, he adopts the conversational style found in Haydn's later quartets. Generally speaking, Pleyel's quartets are shorter than those of Haydn or Mozart. They are usually in three movements, a few just in two. In the two movement quartets, the final movement is usually a theme and set of variations written in concertante style with each instrument getting a variation in which to shine. And while his melodies are often quite simple, at the same time, many are very pleasing and full of charm. Like most composers from this peri-

od, he often writes in concertante style giving each instrument solo passages in the first movement. And many a second violinist and violist, thinking they will have an easy time of it because it is only Pleyel, get a nasty surprise when a tricky solo in their part suddenly appears, often in a very high register. The quartets were generally published in sets of six, although occasionally as a set of three and once as a set of 12. And to make matters confusing, as in the case of Boccherini, because Pleyel had many publishers, the same works often appeared under different opus numbers. It took the Pleyel scholar Rita Benton who in 1977 came out with what is considered the definitive catalog of his works to make sense of things giving them B numbers, much the same as Anthony van Hoboken did for Haydn, and Otto Deutsch did for Schubert and Ludwig Ritter von Köchel did for Mozart. But as in the case with Haydn's quartets where few players know the H numbers but know the opus numbers, the same is true for Pleyel's quartets. I cannot claim to have played all of his quartets, but I have played a good many including his some from Op.2, Op.9., Op.11, Op.41, and Op.42. I shall limit myself to mentioning only three of his better works as being representative and worth your time. These are taken from a set of six which became known as his Prussian Quartets as they were dedicated to the cello-playing Prussian King, Friedrich Wilhelm II. It is thanks to him that we have Mozart's three Prussian Quartets K.575, 589 and 590 and also Haydn's six Op.50 Prussian Quartets. Pleyel trumped them and actually wrote 12 for the King. We know that they were extraordinarily popular, having been published simultaneously by several firms in Paris, London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Mainz, Mannheim, Berlin and Vienna. They date from the mid 1780's.

String Quartet in C Major, Op.9 No.4, B.334 is in three movements--an opening *Allegro con spirito*, followed by a *Adagio cantabile* and a *Rondo Allegro finale*.

String Quartet in A Major, Op.9 No.5, B. 335, the fifth quartet of the set is three movements. The first movement, *Allegro con brio*, has a striking triplet passage against syncopation in the other voices which Mozart clearly borrowed for use in the first movement of his Prussian Quartet K.575. It is followed by a charming and lyrical *Romanza cantabile* and a rustic, Haydn-esque *Rondo Allegro finale*.

String Quartet in E flat Major, Op.9 No.6, B. 336, the last of the set again is in three movements, an *Allegro*, followed by a very short *Menuetto* which is developed by way of variations and a *Presto finale*. The treatment of the *Menuetto* is particularly interesting, one might say unique, in that it does not progress as a typical minuet but after the statement of the theme continues by way of several variations in which each voice is given lengthy solos. The writing combines the older concertante style with the emerging new style pioneered by Haydn. While most of Pleyel's quartets languish in older editions, the above three have received new editions from Edition Silvertrust and there are a few others from other publishers. To sum up, it is fair to say that these quartets cannot match the late Haydn quartets, say from Op.50 on but quite a lot of them are better than his earlier quartets. As such they are, in my opinion, worth your while and some are good enough to be brought to concert instead of a Haydn.



There is virtually no information available about **Wladimir Pogojeff** (1851-1935 more properly Vladimir Petrovich Pogozhev. Some reference sources wrongly gives his name as Nikolai Pogojev and his date of birth as 1874. He is known by the French and German spelling of his name because his publisher, M.P. Belaiev transliterated it like that into French and the Germans followed suit. There never was any English transliteration. His dates are generally listed as 1872-1941 but that is because, once again, those were the dates given by Belaiev. But they are wrong. I shall

refer to him as Pogojeff, since musically this is the spelling by which he has been called. He entered the Imperial Law School in St. Petersburg, the same one that Tchaikovsky attended, and then entered military service as an officer. He left the service in 1882 and served on the Board of Imperial Theaters in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Around this time, he began his musical studies with Rimsky Korsakov privately. He did leave three works for string quartets.

His **Theme & Variations for String Quartet, Op.3** is dedicated to the famous Russian music publisher M.P. Belaiev, who was also his publisher. It dates from 1903. One can hear the influence of his teacher as one hears it in the works of Borodin, Glazunov and Kopylov. It has the same charm and appeal. The theme Pogojeff chooses is a somber and dignified Russian folk tune. He follows it with seven variations and a lengthy coda. The variations provide excellent contrast with each other and include a catchy pizzicato variation, a slow funereal variation, a waltz, a fugue among others. Good enough for concert where a short work is required or as a lengthy encore. Excellent for amateurs.

The **Quartetino in C Major, Op.5** came out in 1906. modestly calling it "Quartetino" most likely because it is not a work of extended length and its four movements are relatively short. But it is a work distinguished by its form, thematic invention and beauty of tone. The opening movement, Allegro, is subtitled Sonatina is genial. The melodies of the second movement, Andante, are warm and intimate. Next comes a jovial Menuetto, full of good spirits. The finale, Allegro assai, has for its main subject a kind of modified Fugue which is rhythmically quite powerful. This is followed by a more lyrical second subject. This is a decent work which can be recommended to amateurs but it is not strong enough to merit concert performance.

His **String Quartet in d minor, Op.7** appeared in 1909. It is a noteworthy work not only because of its Russian flavor but also because it is very well-written and tonally beautiful throughout. The first movement, Allegro, begins with a good theme but even more impressive is the more lyrical second subject. Next comes a Molto Adagio which is full of song-like melodies. The third movement, Vivace, is in the tradition of a Mendelssohnian Elvish Dance and is complimented by a fine Molto espressivo Trio section. The energetic finale, Allegro assai, has for its main theme, a powerful subject and also includes a very nicely executed fugue. Another good work suitable for home music makers but I am not sure it merits being brought into the concert hall.

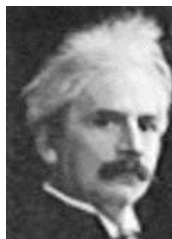


Manuel Ponce (1882-1948) is one of Mexico's best known composers, that said, he is not all that well-known. A piano prodigy, after studying at the Mexican National Conservatory, he studied in Italy at Bologna's Conservatory and in Berlin at the Stern Institute. He returned to Mexico in 1909 and taught at the National Conservatory. In the 1920's, he returned to Europe briefly and

studied with Paul Dukas in Paris.

His only **String Quartet** dates from 1935. It supposedly was an effort to combine Mexican folk melody with the modern techniques he learned in France. It is in four movements: Allegro moderato, Interludio fugado, Andante and Vivo. In my opinion, a lot of the work is either polytonal and in some instances atonal. There is not much in the way of Mexican folk melody to be heard. It makes very brief appearances here and there and is most apparent in the composer's use of rhythms. I cannot recommend this work either for concert or home.

David Popper (1843-1913) was born in Prague. He studied at the Prague Conservatory with Julius Goltermann. He was widely considered the greatest cellist of the last decades of the 19th century and toured as a soloist throughout Europe for nearly 30



years. He knew virtually all of the leading composers of the day such as Wagner, Bruckner, Liszt, Raff and Brahms, with whom he was good friends. Liszt, founder of the Budapest Conservatory, personally selected Popper to be his Professor of Cello. In addition to his solo career, he served as cellist in two of the foremost string quartets of the time, the Hellmesberger Quartet of Vienna and the Hubay-Popper

Quartet of Budapest.

His **String Quartet in c minor, Op.74** was composed in 1903-4 while he was active with the Hubay-Popper Quartet, a group with whom Brahms, among others, had performed on several occasions. While the work shows the influence of Mendelssohn and Schumann, but also of Brahms and Wagner, making for quite an interesting quartet. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, opens with a short introduction before a brooding theme is brought forth in unison, rising quickly to a dramatic climax. The dense texture, created by the chords, gives the movement a great sense of power. The second movement, Scherzo allegro vivace, is playful, fleet and buoyant as well as heavily accented. The music moves forward with great élan. A marvelous chromatic trio section provides a superb contrast. The lovely Adagio grave which follows, though not sad, does have a valedictory, contemplative aura to it. The finale, Allegro vivace, starts with a restless melody and then is interrupted by a series of chords which lead to an ominous, Wagnerian march-like theme. Tension which to a dramatic climax quickly follows. This is a good choice for concert where it will be well received and it can be recommended to amateur players.



Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) is one of the best known Russian composers of the 20th century. He was born in the small town of Sontsivka in the eastern Ukraine. He studied privately with Reinhold Gliere and subsequently entered the St Petersburg Conservatory where he studied with Liadov, Winkler, Tchnerepnin and Rimsky Korsakov. He wrote two string quartets.

His **String Quartet No.1 in b minor, Op.50** dates from 1931. It is in three movements. The opening Allegro bursts out of the starting gate, so to speak, with an exciting theme high in the first violin's register. After a while the excitement dies down and the thematic material wanders around as it is developed. Further on excitement returns with a thrusting subject with some mild chordal dissonance. The second movement, Andante molto, begins in with a mood turgidity. Dark and unpleasant. Later there is a quick nervous section, not exactly upbeat full of pounding. The quartet ends, surprisingly with an Andante. It starts off sad and desolate. Prokofiev was so taken with it that he later made arrangements for string orchestra and piano. Each to his own, but I did not find it very interesting. What can I say, it is Prokofiev and as a result it does get recorded frequently but in forty years of concert going in Chicago, Vienna, Munich, Salzburg, London, Oxford, Zurich, Budapest, Prague and a few other places, I have only heard this quartet performed once. I cannot recall what impression it made on the audience. I have played it, of course, and enjoyed the first movement, but not the last two.

String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.92 came in 1941 and is subtitled Kabardinian. This subtitle refers to the provincial capital in the Caucasus to where Prokofiev and other Soviet musicians and artists were evacuated when the Germans threatened to invade Moscow. The Kabardins were a local tribe. The first movement, Allegro sostenuto, is primarily a continuous repetition of a thumping march-like theme presumably taken from the Kabardins. It is mostly harsh but you can here folkloric influence. The movement, Adagio, has an oriental or Caucasian sound to its main theme which starts off traditionally with occasional infu-

sions of Prokofievian dissonances.. The finale, Allegro, opens sounding like a train wreck with sudden harsh chords interrupting pizzicati. Eventually, a strutting march theme competes with a quick pounding subject. This movement gets way, way better as it moves along and becomes a tour d'force, one of the great movements of the modern literature. For all of its dissonances and harshness, this is an riveting work which holds ones attention far better than the last two movements of his first quartet. Very suitable for concert, though I have never heard it played live other than when my quartet waded through it. Basically, assuming your group consists of technically excellent players who are experience ensemble players, you can, if everyone takes home their part to look at first, make sense of it.



Ebenezer Prout (1839-1909) was born in the English town of Oundle. He studied piano under Charles Salaman, but was otherwise self-taught. He attended the University of London intended for a career as a scholar, but chose to follow one in music through his love of it. He worked as an organist, music critic, and composer, eventually becoming a Professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London as well as a

number of other schools. Several of his chamber music works were awarded first prizes in various competitions. His works on music theory became classics and were translated into many languages, some of which are still used today. Among Prout's students were Eugen d'Albert and Edward German. While alive, his chamber music was quite popular and often performed, but after his death, he was criticized for lack of originality in that his works showed the heavy influence of Mendelssohn and Schumann, composers who were, at the time, very popular in England. While it is true that one can sometimes hear the influence of Mendelssohn or Schumann, his music is not imitative, and in any event this would not have harmed his reputation had he been a German. Most importantly, it cannot take away from the fact that much of his music is very attractive, fun to play and good to hear.

His **String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major, Op.1** dates from 1862 and was awarded First Prize in a competition held by the Society of British Musicians. In four movements, it begins with a genial, Allegro Grazioso. This is followed by a deeply felt Adagio sostenuto. In third place is a highly effective and very original sounding Scherzo with its pizzicato use in the charming trio section. The big finale, Presto con molto fuoco, is full of energy, featuring a Bach-fugue. Suitable for amateurs or students looking for a program work which is not hard to play and sounds good.

String Quartet No.2 in B flat, Op.15 Major dates from 1883. In four movements, it begins with a pleasant Allegro moderato. In second place is a flowing Andante moderato. The third movement, Scherzo presto, makes a strong impression by virtue of its pounding rhythm with a finely contrasting languid trio section. The finale, Allegro assai vivace, is a bright, upbeat dance-like rondo. Another work suitable for amateurs or students.



Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), one of Italy's most famous opera composers, was born in the Italian city of Lucca. He came from a long line of prominent church musicians and studied at the Milan Conservatory with Antonio Bazzini and Amilcare Ponchielli. It is little known that he wrote two works for string quartet.

The one that is occasionally performed is a one movement piece entitled **Crisantemi** or Chrysanthemums. It dates from 1890 and was composed as a memorial to his friend the Duke of Acosta. In two sections, the first section is perfumed and sad. The second is also very romantic and has a yearning quality. Suitable for funeral tributes. Presents no technical problems for amateurs.

It was known that Puccini was working on a string quartet between 1880-1883. Only part of the manuscript survived and finally in 2001 a reconstructed version of what has been called **String Quartet in D Major** appeared. It is pleasant to play and sounds like it may have even been a student work but in no way does it sound like Puccini or Italian for that matter. A trifle, fun to play and not difficult, a concert curiosity but nothing more.

Max Puchat (1859-1919) was born in the then German city of Breslau and studied composition with Friedrich Kiel in Berlin and Franz Liszt in Weimar. He served as a conductor in several German cities as well as Milwaukee in the United States.

He wrote one **String Quartet in F Major, Op.25**. It dates from 1892. It opens with a somber Adagio introduction which appears to have nothing to do with the main section of the first movement Allegro which has an upbeat and searching main theme and the quieter more lyrical second subject. The main theme of the second movement, Intermezzo, andante con moto, quasi allegretto is a march-like melody played against a pizzicato accompaniment which later turns into a chordal accompaniment. The finale begins with is a lengthy Largo patetico introduction. The main section, Allegro vivace. A decent work which can be recommended to amateurs but not strong enough for concert.



M.P. Belaiev

Quartet B-la-F A is a string quartet which was composed by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Antoly Liadov, Alexander Borodin and Alexander Glazunov which was dedicated to lumber millionaire and amateur violist Mitrofan Belaiev, picture on left, whose passion was chamber music. But Belaiev was no ordinary enthusiast. As he approached 50, he decided to devote all of his time and energy and much of his money to the cause of Russian music.

In 1885, he founded the publishing firm bearing his name. His goal was to insure that the works of the up and coming Russian composers would be given the widest possible exposure. Among the beneficiaries of his largess were Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Liadov, Glazunov and many others. These composers and their students became known to posterity as the 'Belaiev Circle.' Each Friday, Belaiev held concerts followed by banquets at his St. Petersburg mansion. These soirees, known as Les Vendredis, became famous. To learn more about them there is an entry in this guide under the letter L. It was at one of these Friday soirees on Belaiev's birthday in 1886, that the four composers, in appreciation of all of his support, presented their patron with a string quartet which was not only dedicated to him but which also was based on a theme taken from his name: B (B flat in German), la (the French for A) and F. Together, they make the sounds of Belaiev's last name. It was a cooperative effort with each composer writing a movement. In each of the four movements, the B-la-F theme is used, but with such ingenuity that one never finds the work tedious. 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 second movement, Scherzo vivace, by Liadov shows an unforced sparkle. Again the viola is given the honor of introducing the first theme, B-La-F. In the trio, Liadov shows off his technique making a new and convincing theme from his note building blocks. The third movement, Serenata alla Spagnola, Allegretto, is by Borodin. It features a very original and ingenious treatment of the thematic material and sounds very Spanish indeed. A brief six measure pizzicato introduction precedes the theme which, of course, is introduced by the viola. The finale, Allegro con spirito, is by Glazunov, Belaiev's favorite, and one can hear he worked hard to make it a real show piece. This attractive and unique work should be welcome on amateur music stands and perhaps an occasional concert performance.



Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) is well-known both for having been a famous piano virtuoso and for having composed several important piano concertos as well as other works for orchestra. Few, however, know that he wrote chamber music. All of his chamber music was written early in his career. In addition to two completed piano trios, a cello sonata, several pieces for violin and piano and two string quartets neither of which is complete. Both have only two movements. Over the years, there has been much speculation as to whether the parts to the other movements were lost or whether Rachmaninov simply never got around to completing either work.

String Quartet No.1 dates from 1889 and received a performance two years later at the Moscow Conservatory. The work, however, remained unpublished and the parts only existed in manuscript until 1947 when Professors Dobrokholov and Kirkor of the Moscow Conservatory brought out an edition. The two extant movements are marked Romance, andante espressivo and Scherzo, allegro. They show the influence of his then teachers, Alexander Arensky and Sergei Taneyev, however, his use of chromaticism is characteristic of his writing throughout his life. In the atmospheric and lovely Romance the strings are muted throughout creating a world through a fish bowl effect. The Scherzo which follows is light and bright and provides a fine contrast. Interesting for amateurs and perhaps where a short work on a concert program is needed.

String Quartet No.2 dates from 1896. There is no conclusive evidence that the work was ever performed in Rachmaninov's lifetime. He apparently did not write out the parts and there appears to have only been a score which existed in manuscript. Finally, in 1947, through the work of Professors Dobrokholov and Kirkor of the Moscow Conservatory, the score and a set of parts were published by the Soviet State Publishers during Stalin's time. The two extant movements are marked Allegro moderato and Andante molto sostenuto. As such, it is fair to assume that these comprise the first two movements of the work. The Allegro moderato begins in a melancholy mood, not dark or tragic, but certainly not bright or happy. Although he clearly writes in his own voice, one can nonetheless hear the influence of Tchaikovsky whose music greatly influenced him. The tempo remains relaxed although there are several abrupt climaxes. He takes his time in creating any tension, waiting until the introduction of the second subject. The Andante molto sostenuto begins darkly in mysterious fashion. The cello opens with a repeating motif which as the music takes shape appears to be a funeral march. Well, after all, it is Rachmaninov, the music is appealing so again it could be used in concert as a short work. Good for amateurs.



From 1860 to 1900 the name of **Joachim Raff** (1822-1882) was regularly mentioned in the same breath as Wagner, Liszt, and Brahms as one of Germany's leading composers. All of the critical commentaries which appeared during those years spoke of him as an equal to such masters as Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky. Incredibly, by the 1920's his music had all but disappeared from the concert

stage. It seems virtually unimaginable that a composer whose talent was recognized and whose music was admired by Mendelssohn and Liszt, could become a mere footnote, yet this is what became of Raff and his music for most of the 20th century. Only now is he being rediscovered to the delight of those fortunate enough to hear his music. Raff was born near Zurich and his family had hoped he would become a school teacher, but music was his first love. Basically self-taught, Raff sent some of his early compositions to Mendelssohn who immediately recognized

his talent and arranged for their publication. Unfortunately, Mendelssohn died before he could help Raff much more. The young composer then approached Liszt who also took an interest in him and took him on as his personal secretary and copyist. During the six years he spent with Liszt, Raff became a member of the so-called "New German School" led by Wagner and Liszt. Although he broke from them in 1856, he was still regarded as a Wagnerite by the supporters of Brahms and the other classicists. In short, Raff was in neither camp, but attacked by both. Isolated, he went his own way, paying little attention to the musical politics of late 19th century Germany. But going his own way was hardly an easy proposition. Nearly starving, for many years Raff was forced to crank out compositions for the commercial market (works that would sell but were of little intrinsic or artistic merit), one after another as fast as he could. Sadly, this was later to tarnish his legacy. After his reputation had faded, he was regarded merely as a composer of parlor pieces, despite the magnificent symphonic and chamber works he left behind. Anyone who has had the time to hear these great works quickly realizes that Raff could be an impeccable craftsman when he had the luxury of time and was not forced to write for the home music marketplace.

His **String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.77** dates from 1855, the last year he spent with Liszt and the moody, nocturnal atmosphere of the work shows that master's influence, especially where Raff seeks to create original sound effects. The big, opening movement, *Mässig schnell, ruhig, breit*, immediately establishes the dark and brooding temperament that quickly leads to several highly dramatic episodes. Next comes a Mendelssohnian elvedance, *Sehr lustig, möglich rasch*, the tempo marking literally telling the performers to play it as fast as possible. The very appealing trio section is quite lyrical and provides excellent contrast. This is followed by a long, slow movement, *Mässig langsam, getragen*, which begins as a simple and quiet melody that Schubert might have written. Gradually, however, Raff begins to explore a new world of tonality which no one would revisit for nearly 30 years until Hugo Wolf and the young Schönberg took up where Raff left off. In the powerful finale, *Rasch*, the music begins softly with echoes from the scherzo of Beethoven's 9th Symphony. The thematic material rushes onward with incredible drive. This is an important work worthy of serious study. The formal construction of this quartet shows technique of the highest order and many ingenious tonal effects are produced. This work qualifies, in my opinion, as a masterwork and belongs in the concert hall. Recommended to technically assured amateur players.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.90 came out in 1862. The first movement, *Rasch, jedoch ruhig* has decent thematic material at times recalling Wagner, but the development wanders. The second movement, *Rasch* is a particularly fine scherzo, a Raff specialty, with several original touches such as the trills and harmonics in the second violin accompaniment. The whole thing is quite piquant and amusing. Next comes a slow movement, *Langsam, doch nicht schleppend*. Here, we have a simple yet promising theme which delivers on the passion that it promises. The finale, *Rasch* is clever is full of forward motion and good spirits. It creates a pleasing effect. It can be recommended to amateurs of good ability but I would not bring it to concert.

String Quartet No.3 in e minor, Op.136 was finished in 1866. It was the first of a set of three Raff wrote during the winter of 1866-7 as he was recovering from a severe illness. It was dedicated to the famous Hellmesberger Quartet of Vienna in gratitude for their championing his works. Unlike his first two quartets, which showed the influence of Wagner and Liszt, his subsequent quartets show a clear break from their so called New German School of music. For one thing, the tempo markings and other directions are all in the standard Italian rather than the German which the Wagnerians favored. And the structure is clearly in the classical tradition. In the opening movement, *Allegro*, the restless opening theme, characterized by its triplet rhythm and

Mendelssohnian effects. A second more lyrical subject, full of yearning, appears periodically to provide contrast. The second movement, *Allegro con moto*, is in the form of a march-like heavily accented scherzo. Next comes an *Andante con moto*. It opens quite simply with a simple folk-like melody. What follows are a set of superb variations in which Raff shows his great compositional skill with shifts of articulation, rhythm and instrumental combinations. It even includes a clever fugue before it ends with a hymn. The bright finale, *Allegro con spirito*, with its nervous accompaniment is bustles along, full of good spirits. Perhaps good enough for concert but certainly for good amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in a minor, Op.137 was completed immediately after No.3. It was dedicated to the famous violinist Ferdinand Laub, who at the time was leader of the best known quartet in Russia, and who gave performances of Raff's quartets. In the opening movement, *Allegro patetico*, begins with a poignant, sad theme given out by the first violin over a restless accompaniment. The fetching second subject is then presented by the cello. Next comes a light hearted and lively scherzo type movement, *Allegro non troppo vivo, quasi allegretto*. The third movement, *Andante*, is in the form of a melancholy romance. The finale, *Andante—Presto*, makes use of a format which Beethoven also used in his 9th Symphony. It begins rather like a recitativ and then the themes from the preceding movements are briefly presented before the upbeat and lively finale melody is presented. I can recommend it for good amateurs, perhaps for concert.

String Quartet No. 5 in G Major, Op. 138, the last of this set was completed in 1867. It opens with an *Allegro tranquillo*, genial with forward motion but the thematic material is not compelling. Perhaps his compositional juices were running dry at this point. The *Allegro vivace* which comes next is an excellent scherzo. He rarely wrote a bad one, and this one is quite good. In third place is a warm, romantic, singing *Larghetto*. The quartet ends with a playful and maybe a little bit trite *Allegro vivace*. Not for concert by amateurs may find it of interest.

String Quartet No.6 in c minor, Op.192 No.1 is the first of one of the most famous sets of three dated from 1876. It is subtitled "Suite in the Ancient Style", the sort or work of which Raff was a master. In five movements, the opening *Praeludium* begins with a powerful *Larghetto* at the end of which an extraordinary cadenza in the first violin leads to an *Allegro*. Here the main theme of the *Larghetto* is combined with that of a superb fugue. The second movement, a *Minuetto*, starts off as a classical minuet but quickly morphs into something far more romantic and enticing with the introduction of the lovely lyrical theme. There is no trio but a powerful middle section, which suddenly dissolves into a gorgeous and ethereal melody in the cello. A *Gavotte* and particularly atmospheric *Musette* follow. The fourth movement, *Arie* is a broadly phrased, expansive and stunning melody given forth by the first violin to a hushed accompaniment in the other voices. The finale is a fleet-footed *Gigue*. This work is an unquestionable masterwork. Its inclusion on any concert program would surely be a great success. Amateurs will certainly enjoy playing it.

The second of this set, **String Quartet No.7 in D Major, Op.192 No.2** is subtitled "The Maid of the Mill". after Schubert's famous song cycle *Die Schöne Müllerin*, was one of the most performed string quartets on concert programs between 1876 and 1914. It is a programmatic work which tells the same story as Schubert's song cycle by the same name. A young man passes by a mill and sees a beautiful girl, the maid of the mill. For him, it is love at first sight. Finally he proposes and she accepts. In six movements, the opening *Allegro* presents the young fellow as he travels along. The second movement, subtitled the Mill, also is an *Allegro*. At one time, this was one of the most famous movements in the entire string quartet literature and was frequently played by itself as an encore. The third movement, a lovely *Andante quasi Adagietto*, portrays the Maid of the Mill. Then comes *Unrest*, an *Allegro*, which portrays the young man struggling to

get up the courage to propose. The fifth movement, *Andantino quasi Allegretto*, also was quite famous and used as an encore for more than half a century. Entitled *The Proposal*, it is a highly romantic lovers' duet between the cello and first violin. The finale, *Wedding Eve Feast (Zum Polterabend)* is the traditional celebration in German lands which takes place the night before the wedding. At the feast, old crockery was smashed to bring luck to the happy couple. Not as hard as some of his earlier quartets, amateurs will certainly get pleasure from this fine work which would also be well received by concert audiences.

String Quartet No.8 in C Major, Op.192 No.3 was subtitled in Canonic Style. One is clearly able to hear the composer's mastery of this form which he treats in seven movements. The work begins with a fleet *March, Allegro* and features a particularly attractive middle section. The *Saraband, Andante moderato assai*, which follows is tasteful and attractive. Third is a humorous *Capriccio, vivace* and then a serious *Arie, quasi larghetto* which is in the form of a double canon. The fifth movement is an appealing *Gavotte, allegro* which has a very effective *Musette*. Entirely impressive is the powerful *Menuet, Allegro molto*, which is sixth. The finale is a straight forward *Gigue, allegro*. Good enough for concert performance and to be recommended to amateurs.



Andreas Randel (1806-1864) was born in the Swedish village of Stockebromåla. He was trained as a violinist in Stockholm and his talent was such that he was sent to Paris to study violin with the virtuoso Pierre Baillot and composition with Luigi Cherubini. After returning to Stockholm he obtained a position in the court orchestra, eventually becoming its concertmaster. He wrote three string quartets which were published in 1858, however scholars believe it was composed around 1830, shortly after he returned from France.

I am only familiar with his **String Quartet in f minor**. It is subtitled *Quatuor Brillant*, and while the first violin certainly dominates as was generally typical the time, it is not a show off vehicle or mini concerto for the first violin as Louis Spohr's *quatuor brillants* generally are. Melodically, it resembles the French music of his teacher and of the Jadin brothers. He had a gift for melodies. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, is well done and holds the attention. The second movement, *The second movement, Scherzo vivace*, is also well done, kept alive by its military rhythm which suits the melody. The slowly and more lyrical trio section provides a nice contrast. Third comes an *Adagio con espressione*. The main theme is charming and very romantic. The finale, *Allegro scherzando*, is exciting and suitable for a closing movement. This is a good quartet and historically important as not much was coming out of Sweden at this time. It could be successfully programed in concert in place of a Haydn or as an example of the early romantic in Sweden. It can be recommended to amateurs with a technically secure first violinist.



Georg Rauchenecker (1844-1906) was born in Munich where he studied violin, organ and composition. He worked in several French towns holding various posts such as concertmaster, conductor and organist until the advent of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. For the next 15 years, he lived in Switzerland. After this time, he worked in Germany. He composed in every genre and left six string quartets, a string sextet and a piano quartet. During his lifetime, his works were often performed and he had a good reputation. But, like so many composers of the Romantic era, his name and music all but disappeared in the reaction against the romantic movement after the First World War. While in Switzerland, Rauchenecker was introduced to Wagner who was living close by. Soon after, Rauchenecker became a member of the *Trieb-*

schen Quartet which performed several concerts devoted to Beethoven's quartets under the general direction of Wagner. This experience left a strong impression on Rauchenecker.

The influence of both Wagner and Beethoven can clearly be heard in his **String Quartet No.1 in c minor**, composed during this time in 1874. One also can hear the influence of Mendelssohn and Schubert. In four movements, the quartet begins Allegro impetuoso. The main theme bears some resemblance to that which Wagner used in his Siegfried Idyll, yet the movement is fresh and well-wrought. In the second movement, Andante moderato, the viola introduces the lovely melody, which serves as the main theme. It is clearly the center of gravity for the quartet and the music has an affinity to one of Mendelssohn's songs without words. This is followed by a short but robust Allegro vivace complete with a lovely trio section. The quartet concludes with a very convincing Allegro con fuoco which blends an exciting, galloping first theme with a less-driving but lyrical second subject. Here is a good work which would be equally at home in the concert hall and on the music stands of amateurs.

I cannot say the same for his **String Quartet No.2 in D Major** which dates from 1878. It opens with a heavily chorded and somewhat lugubrious Grave introduction of substantial length which is not easy to hold together. It leads to an Allegro ma non troppo which while not bad is not memorable either as the thematic material does not stick with one. The Andante con moto which is next is decent. In third place is an Allegro vivace and last a Vivace, both with lots of forward motion but not much impressive melodic writing that is so apparent in his first quartet. Certainly not for concert, amateurs can try it and decide for themselves. I am not familiar with his last four string quartets.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) is one of France's best known composers and his string quartet is justly famous and the one most often programmed in concert when a work from the French Impressionist era is required. Much has been written about it and there is nothing I can add which you cannot read elsewhere, except to recommend that you make its acquaintance. It is not easy, but can be managed by experience amateurs.

Antonin Rázek (1852-1929) was born in Prague. He studied trombone, piano, composition and violin at the Prague Conservatory, the latter for a short time with Ferdinand Laub. He served as a conductor of various military bands and taught at a military academy. In the Czech lands, he was known for his songs. He wrote several short humorous pieces for string quartet with such names as The Cat's Serenade, Lady Frog Boogy, Morning in the Chicken Coop and several others, nineteen in all. These works circulated in manuscript form among string quartet players in the Austrian Empire until they were finally published in the 1920s and then again more recently by Edition Silvertrust **Six Comic Pieces for String Quartet** and by another publisher as well. These works are hilarious, wonderfully conceived and executed, sounding true to life. If you are not beyond enjoying a humorous work or two, you can do no better than these wonderful pieces. They are highly entertaining and can be used as encores.



Max Reger (1873-1916) was born in the small Bavarian town of Brand. He began his musical studies at a young age and his talent for composition became clear early on. His family expected him to become a school teacher like his father and to this end passed the necessary examinations for certification. However, before he landed his first teaching job, he met the eminent musicologist Hugo Riemann, who was so impressed by Reger's talent that he urged him to devote himself entirely to music. Reger studied with him for nearly five years. By 1907, Reger was

appointed to the prestigious position of Professor of composition at the Leipzig Conservatory. In addition to this he was widely regarded as one of the best living conductors and organists. In a career that only lasted 20 years, Reger wrote a prodigious amount of music in virtually every genre except opera and the symphony. Chamber music figures prominently within his oeuvre. Many have said that Reger is an acquired taste and it is true that on first hearing often listeners cannot follow entirely what he is trying to do. Reger, rejected atonalism categorically, but realized that the Romantic Era was fast dying and hoped to find a new way, tonal but different from Romanticism. Some say he succeed, others disagree. Musically, he is a controversial figure. He wrote five string quartets with opus numbers starting in 1901.

But he had composed five canonical quartets in earlier and a **String Quartet in d minor** in 1888. It is in three movements and there is little doubt that Brahms was his guide star. The first movement, Allegro energico, reeks of Brahms but the thematic material is for the most part unfocused and does not hold one's attention except for a few brief moments. An Adagio, recalling in some ways Schubert, The finale, Aufschwung (translated various as uplift, recovery) has an optional part for bass. Reger was all of 15 and yet to study with Riemann so the work must be regarded merely as an example of his untutored style. Cannot see any reason to recommend this for concert or to amateurs.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.54 No.1 dates from 1901. The opening movement, Allegro agitato is densely, perhaps too densely, scored and full of agitated emotion. All of the instruments are continually given important passages simultaneously, creating a charged atmosphere which is straining at the bounds of chamber music. The second movement, Vivace assai, is a scherzo into which Reger inserts a sense of joviality. The emotional depth of the Largo mesto, which follows, is quite intense while the finale, Prestissimo assai, lightens the mood and features a wonderful double fugue in which the theme is developed by stretto, by inversion and by fragmentation. The thrilling conclusion is always an audience pleaser. This is an important work in which Reger begins on a new post-Brahmsian path. Certainly professionals who present it in concert will be rewarded by their audiences. But experienced amateurs can also wade in.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op. 54 dates from 1910 is the shortest of his quartets. I pause to relate that the first movement is marked Allegro assai e Bizarro. That says it all. The music is restless, choppy, with many tempo changes and too many and too quick thematic changes. This quartet in more difficult to No.1 and less pleasant to hear, not atonal, but barely tonal.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.74 came in 1903. This is a very big work. It tires out both the players as well as the listeners. All of the voices are often give parts in their higher registers, again, creating polyphonic complexity due to the dense scoring. There are moments of some beauty and clarity. Tonally this is perhaps the most challenging of the quartets. Not easily navigated and requiring more than one hearing to make sense of.

String Quartet No.4 in E flat Major Op. 109 was completed in 1909. To say that the quartet is complex is probably an understatement. It is worth noting that there actually are lyrical episodes, not too many though, and they stand out all the more because of what they are surrounded by.

In his **String Quartet No.5 in f sharp minor, Op.121** (Hello Beethoven) Reger retreats from his New Way. The quartet was dedicated to the famous Bohemian String Quartet and premiered in 1911. By comparison to the others, it is lyrical and tonal, but still rather complex with plenty of difficult fugal episodes. In the slow movements, there are distant echoes of Dvorak.

Anton Reicha, (1770-1836, Antonin Rejcha in the Czech form) was born in Prague. Orphaned at an early age, he went to Bavaria to live with his uncle, Joseph Reicha a concert cellist and music director. He studied composition, violin, flute, piano and compo-



sition while with his uncle. In 1785, they went to Bonn, where Joseph became music director at the electoral court. There, Anton got to know Beethoven with whom he became friends. He traveled extensively, holding positions in Hamburg, Vienna and Paris, where he eventually settled. By 1810 he was a professor at the Paris Conservatory and became one of the most famous teachers of his time. George

Onslow, Louise Farrenc, Franz Liszt, Hector Berlioz, Cesar Franck and Charles Gounod were among his many students. He also gained fame as a theorist. He was an innovator in many areas. Though perhaps not the inventor of the Wind Quintet, he was the first to popularize it. A prolific composer, he wrote in virtually every genre. Chamber music is a very important part of his oeuvre. He may have written as many as thirty string quartets. Of these, the eight quartets published by Breitkopf und Härtel in 1804-1805 were perhaps the earliest and somewhat experimental for the time. Reicha lived in Vienna between 1801 and 1808 before he moved to Paris. Some scholars have opined that the first six, Op.48 Nos.1-3 and Op.49 Nos.1-3 may have been a response to Beethoven's Op. 18. Five of the quartets share key signatures with the Beethoven.

String Quartet in C Major, Opus 48 No.1 begins with an Allegro moderato the main theme to which is a sort of simple, rocking lullaby. There are some strange things going on at times, but I would not call the music riveting. Next comes an Adagio, the thematic material is not memorable. The Menuetto, allegro which follows is Haydnesque but the thematic material is pale compared to what Haydn could come up with. The finale, Presto, is also Haydnesque. It is the best movement of the work but I would not recommend it to professionals let alone amateurs,

String Quartet in G Major, Opus 48 No. 2 opens with a pleasant Allegro which sounds like it could have been written in the 1780s and not 1805. Lots of forward movement. The Adagio poco andante for its main theme has a rather trite sounding melody. There is nothing of interest here. A powerful, thrusting and first rate Menuetto allegro comes next. Wow, perhaps the impression is so strong because the weak second movement. The finale, Allegretto is a gentle, old fashioned affair in 6/8, forgettable. Not hard to see why this work disappeared,

String Quartet in E flat Major, Opus 48 No. 3 begins with a dignified and also old fashioned Allegro moderato. Not memorable, not exciting. In second place is a Largo which has an effective, long-lined melody which is appealing. The movement is a cut above the first. Again comes a Menuetto, allegro assai which explodes quite noisily but most of it is Haydnesque. One wonders why these explosions keep interrupting. They are stunning but out of place and lead to a sense of awkwardness. The finale, Fuga, allegro vivace is from a structural standpoint extremely well done, but the theme which is the subject of fugue is pretty ordinary. Still, this is an effective movement. I can recommend this quartet to amateurs but I would not bring it into the concert hall.

The opening movement to **String Quartet No in c minor, Opus 49 No. 1** starts off slowly with a mysterious theme with no indication of what is to come, which is actually quite powerful, compelling and in some ways rather Beethovenian because of its dotted rhythm. It is quite an original movement. The Adagio sempre piano which follows proceeds in fugal fashion. There is a funereal like slow march quality, like a group of 80 year old pall bearers slowly and laborious moving with the load. This too is original and well done. The Menuetto allegro which comes next is rather heavy due to the writing for the lower voices. It is not as striking as the preceding two movements. It rather sounds like Reicha was trying to sound different but it is not convincing. The concluding movement, Allegro, in part sounds in part like an exercise. There is a lot of pounding going on here to no particular reason that I could hear. The first two movements are first rate,

the last two not. It could be recommended to amateurs but not for concert. I am unfamiliar with String Quartet No. 5 in D Major, Op. 49 No. 2 or No.6 in B flat Major, Opus 49 No. 3.

String Quartet in G Major, Op.90 No.2 is the second of a set of six from 1819 although it shows no advance in any way. If anything it sounds as if were composed before Op.48. It begins with an Andante introduction which leads to an Allegro. Pretty ordinary stuff. A lugubrious somewhat religious sounding Andante is second. Third is a Minuetto allegro which is fresh and original sounding. This is a good movement. To close things out there is a pretty effective, at least for Reicha, Allegro. This quartet could be recommended to amateurs but not for concert.

String Quartet in f minor, Op.94 No.3 is the last of a set of three which was composed in 1824, It has for its first movement a Lento introduction leading to the exciting main section which sounds as if it might have been written, in part, by Rossini. An effective movement. The Andante maestoso which follows is unmemorable. The fact that the Menuetto allegro canone is written in canonic style does not save it from being uninteresting. The finale, Allegro vivace is okay but nothing really special. The first movement by itself is not enough to rescue it from obscurity.

String Quartet in E Major, Op.95 No.1. This quartet also came out in 1824. It does not in anyway sound more advanced than Opp.48 or 49. There are, however some similarities, such as the sudden tremolo like explosions which occur without warning and for no real reasons. The opening Allegro moderato is pleasant, if unremarkable. The second movement, Poco andante, suffers from any identifiable theme. To be sure, there is melody but it does not lend itself to being remembered and is unfocused. The Menuetto allegretto starts off as if it was going to be a musette and these few bars are repeated throughout but it is not a musette. It is original and has some charm to it. The finale, Allegretto, begins rather trevally with its simple 6/8 theme. The second subject is much better but he does not make as much of it as he could. Not for concert or home.



Nowadays, **Carl Reinecke** (1824-1920) has been all but forgotten, an unjust fate for a man who excelled in virtually every musical field with which he was involved. As a performer, Reinecke was, during the mid-19th century, reckoned for three decades as one of the finest concert pianists before the public. As a composer, he produced widely respected and often performed works in every genre running the gamut from opera, to orchestral to chamber music. As a conductor, he helped turn the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra into a group with few if any peers. As its director, he helped the Leipzig Conservatory become what was widely regarded as the finest in the world. As a teacher of composition and of piano, he was considered to have few if any equals. Among his many students were Grieg, Bruch, Janacek, Albeniz, Sinding, Svendsen, Reznicek, Delius, Arthur Sullivan, George Chadwick, Ethel Smyth, Felix Weingartner, Karl Muck and Hugo Riemann. In his time, Reinecke and his music were unquestionably regarded as first rate. Reinecke was born near Hamburg in the town of Altona, then in the possession of Denmark. Most of his musical training was obtained from his father, who was a widely respected teacher and author. Starting in 1845 at the age 21, he began concertizing across Europe, in the course of which he was appointed court pianist to the King of Denmark. Mendelssohn, Schumann and Liszt all were favorably impressed by him and helped him gain an appointment at the Cologne Conservatory. By 1860, Reinecke's reputation was such that he obtained a teaching position at the prestigious Leipzig Conservatory, which had been founded by Mendelssohn, and eventually rose to become its director. His and excellence as a teacher can be attested to by the list of famous students.

When listening to his **String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major,**

Op.16 which dates from 1848, one can't help but notice the influence of Mendelssohn and Schumann. Not surprising in view of the fact that at the time Schumann was so impressed with Reinecke that he entrusted him with all of the arrangements of his works. He was fond of saying that "*Reinecke knows what I will compose before I have put pen to paper.*" The first movement, *Allegro agitato*, is promising with its attractive main theme., One hears the influence of Mendelssohn in the running passages over long-lined melodies. The second movement, *Andante con moto*, is a fetching theme and well executed variations. One of the variations takes a quote from the recitativ of Mendelssohn's Op.13 quartet and cleverly varies it.. The third movement is an exciting Scherzo full of forward motion. The finale, *Molto vivace*, has a rustic, jovial subject for its main theme and makes for a satisfactory conclusion. This work is suitable for concert and home.

String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.30 was completed in 1851 and published the following year. This is a very interesting work showing a true artist's hand, witty thematic material and admirably put together. Especially noteworthy is the rich and densely woven Adagio. The exciting outer movements and the fleet Scherzo show the influence of Mendelssohn. The exciting finale sounds as if Schumann himself could have penned it. Suitable for home or concert.

String Quartet No.3 in C Major, Op.132 dates from 1874, while he was serving as director of both the Leipzig Conservatory and the Gewandhaus Orchestra. The first movement, *Allegro*, is upbeat and genial, filled with lovely melodies, the first of which is a real toe tapper. The second movement, *Lento ma non troppo*, is a kind of Mendelssohnian Song Without Words. With the third movement, Reinecke surprises---rather than a light scherzo or intermezzo that Mendelssohn or Schumann might have written, he places a dark and brooding *Molto moderato*, a very Brahmsian like movement. The finale, *Allegro*, is bright and celebratory in mood. Full of forward motion, there are echoes of Mendelssohn. Good for concert and home.

String Quartet No.4 in D Major, Op.211 appeared in 1891. It is a pleasing, well-written, amiable work which plays well and sounds good. Overall, one hears echoes of Schumann. The first movement begins with an atmospheric, lengthy *Lento* introduction which leads to a good natured, optimistic *Allegro*. The second movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, is song-like and sounds a bit Brahmsian. A charming Scherzo, *vivace ma non troppo*, quasi *Allegretto* follows, and the pizzicato episodes are particularly effective. The finale is a very appealing *Allegro gioioso* which once again features particularly telling use of pizzicato. This is yet another quartet good enough for concert performance and which can be recommended to amateurs.

Hearing or playing Carl Reinecke's **String Quartet No.5 in g minor, Op.287**, published in the year 1910, would never guess that it was the work of an 85 year old as it is so full of youthful vigor and warm-blooded melodies. It is truly a wonder. There is absolutely no indication that the composer of this quartet was an old man, to the contrary, the way in which the work is written suggests the opposite. The opening movement, *Allegro, Molto moderato e maestoso*, is full of energy and interest, a tour d'force. No longer do we hear Mendelssohn or Schumann for Reinecke has moved with the times into the late Romantic era. The second movement, a gorgeous Adagio, full of fine emotion, truly breathes the air of Romanticism. Next comes a lovely, charming but lively Scherzo *allegretto* that has a yearning quality with a very nicely contrasting trio. The exemplary writing is clear throughout and the composer's intimate knowledge of string instruments is also on display here. The finale, *Molto moderato e maestoso*, opens somewhat ominously and leads to the exciting main section. If this quartet is not a masterwork, it certainly is as close as one can come to it. I think it belongs in the repertoire and should not be missed by amateur players.

I would emphasize that all five of these quartets deserve to be heard in concert and enjoyed at home.



Carl Gottlieb Reissiger (1798-1859) was born in the Prussian town of Belzig. He originally attended the famous Thomasschule in Leipzig as his father intended him to be a priest, however, his extraordinary musical talent was recognized and he was encouraged to pursue a musical career. His initial studies were with Johann Schlicht, Bach's fifth successor as Cantor of the Thomasschule. Subsequently, he went to Vienna and studied with Salieri. An early opera attracted Carl Maria von Weber's attention and Reissiger went to Dresden, eventually succeeding Weber as Music Director of the Dresden Court Orchestra, a post he held until his death. A leading conductor of German opera, Wagner worked under Reissiger for nearly a decade. Reissiger premiered Wagner's first opera. A prolific composer, as most composers of that time were, he penned works in virtually every genre. His works show the influence of the Viennese masters, in particular Schubert and Beethoven. He wrote eight string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major, Op.111 No.1, the first of a set of three which came out in 1837. They were dedicated to his friend Antonio Rolla, concertmaster of the court orchestra in Dresden and son of the famous Italian composer Alessandro Rolla. Schumann is reputed to have sarcastically remarked after hearing the Op.111 performed that they broke no new ground, showing as they did the influence of Mozart, Beethoven, Spohr and Onslow and they did not promise Reissiger a long life as a composer. Nonetheless, Schumann thought because of the appealing melodic material, would be welcomed by amateur quarteters. That assessment in my opinion holds true. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, is pretty ordinary. It sounds more like Spohr than anyone else with its chromatic violin runs. A fleet and exciting Scherzo *presto* is placed second. This is a much better movement which holds the listener's attention. The Adagio *espressivo* which comes third makes no impression. The finale, *Vivace*, has for its main theme a captivating melody and movement is nicely handled. This quartet is suitable for amateurs but not strong enough for concert.

String Quartet No.2 in b minor, Op.111 No.2 has for its first movement a substantial, slow Beethovenian introduction, *Andante con passione* which leads to a lively main section *Allegro moderato ma appassionato*. A decent movement. Second is an *Andante con moto e fantastico*, contrary to Schumann's opinion, is original and unusual but not unfortunately compelling. The music is sad and rather sedate but continually interrupted without warning by bursts of energetic passion of rhythmic power. It reminds me of what Anton Reicha often did in his quartets and perhaps Reissiger was familiar with these. The third movement, a fleet Scherzo, begins in canonic form continues on this way. Decent, but the thematic material is ordinary. The finale, *Allegro brillante ma non troppo*, is a toe-tapping rondo. On the whole this quartet is weaker than No.1 and I think amateurs can give it a miss. I am not familiar with **String Quartet No.3**.

String Quartet No.4 in f minor, Op.155 composed in 1840 is a huge improvement over the Op.111 quartets. It is full of good material, and finished in form. It is perhaps no coincidence that the key of f minor and influence of Beethoven's Op.95 in the same key, can be felt though not heard, particularly in the broad, exuberant, and rhythmically impressive first movement, *Allegro fiero*, and in the trio section of the Scherzo, where the gentle lament of the trio section is interrupted by transitional passages. The Scherzo itself, which is placed second, is made extremely effective by the pointed rhythms and the use of chromatics. The *Andante quasi allegretto* has at first look has the appearance of a song without words, but it later takes a dramatic turn, and finally

dies softly away. In the operatic finale the excitement of the hurrying, scurrying figures is most effectively contrasted with an air resembling a chorale. Good for amateurs but not for concert.

String Quartet No.5 in E flat Major, Op.179 was published shortly after it was completed in 1844. It begins with a short but appealing Andante introduction which leads to an operatic Allegro giusto which is pretty good. A Beethovenian Andante, at least in spirit is in second place. It is followed by a Mozartian Scherzo with contrasting trio. The march like finale, Allegro, in some aspects recalls Beethoven's Op.18 No.6 La Malinconia. All in all a respectable effort with good part-writing and no technical difficulties. It can be recommended to amateurs but not for concert. I am not familiar with his last three string quartets, Op.211



Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) was born in Bologna and studied violin, piano and composition at the local conservatory. Becoming a first rate viola player, he was engaged to play a season for the Imperial Orchestra in St. Petersburg where he met and subsequently studied composition with Rimsky-Korsakov. Upon his return to Italy, he took up residence in Rome where he lived for the rest of his life. He is mostly known to the general public as a composer of large scale, flashy works for orchestra. But he was also interested in chamber music, especially during the first part of his life.

The **String Quartet D Major from 1907** (Respighi had written three previous quartets in the key of D) is the most readily accessible to listener and player alike. The initial theme in the first violin is accompanied by a smoothly athletic, arpeggiated cello line and a triplet subtext: The second theme features leaps and interesting silences in notable contrast to the legato treatment of the first theme. The second movement is a Theme and set of variations. It is extremely chromatic both melodically and in the chordal accompaniment. Respighi begins the variations by doubling the speed of the melody or the accompaniment. A waltz variation comes next with the melody in the first violin sung against a cello drone. This is followed by a Lento variation in contrapuntal though legato style, and a peasant-like scherzo. The final variation is a Lento doloroso. The gorgeous third movement, Intermezzo, is densely scored. The Finale sounds programmatic, with a Germanic hunting theme against a background of triplets. The writing is dense and orchestral, but works well for quartet. Good for concert and home players of good ability.

His **String Quartet in d minor** dates from 1909. On the title page to the quartet is a quotation from Friedrich Schiller's *Wallenstein*: "Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst"—Life is serious, Art is joyful. That this so is probably because it, was written while Respighi lived in Berlin in not particularly comfortable circumstances, supporting himself as an accompanist in a singing school. The opening, Allegro sports a lovely and beautiful, but rather sad theme introduced by the viola. The music flows in and out of the minor and manages to end in the major. A very chromatic and impressive Lament con tristezza—molto calmo follows with a doleful violin solo played against the dark ostinato of the lower voices. Just before the exquisite coda, the heaviness of the music dissipates and the theme wafts away into nothingness. The third movement, Presto, though not marked scherzo fulfills that function. It is a wild dance, a tarantella, and the use of ponticello and pizzicato is particularly effective in creating a lasting impression. The tonalities are often quite advanced. The energetic but complicated finale, Allegro energico, is also filled with some very adventurous (for the time) dissonances. Several robust cross rhythms have the effect of giving the work a curious and unsettling quality, but there is no denying that this is a great tour d'force. A good concert choice and for very good amateurs as well.

The **Quartetto Dorico**, which is in one movement, appeared in 1924 during his so-called Gregorian period. The word 'Dorico', in the case of this quartet, refers to ancient styles rather

than the Dorian mode. In fact, the quartet begins in Aeolian mode (the equivalent of A-A on the white keys or the piano, or natural minor) The melody is presented in unisons and octaves in all 4 voices, with recitative-like chords interspersed. The octave doublings and 5ths, with only sparing use of 3rds, and imitative entrances evokes an ancient style. The development includes a challenging section for the first violin with octaves in contrary motion to the cello. The development then segues into a kind of unofficial 2nd movement, Molto animato. The first violin states the melody, with support from the cello, and the accompanying voices interpolate pizzicato chords into the dance-like texture. The writing is very, very dense and filled with difficult chords more suited to a piano than strings. The Quartet swells to an orchestral flourish at the end, with double-stops in all four parts, and unison ascending scales. This is not a quartet for amateurs. It is an interesting work and perhaps deserves performance.



August Reuss (1871-1935) was born in the town of Liliendorf in the Moravian province of the Austrian Habsburg Empire. He studied composition with Ludwig Thuille at the Munich Conservatory. Subsequently, he worked as a teacher. He wrote two string quartets. **String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.25** dates from 1907. The music of the opening movement, Heftig bewegt, is as the movement title suggests, stormy and violent.

The second movement is an appealing Scherzo in which the cello is given the opportunity to present the main subject. There is a fetching and nicely contrasting trio. The slow movement, Langsam mit Empfindung, has a noble subject for its main theme and resembles a song without words. The calm is interrupted by an agitated fugal section. The main theme from the finale, Bewegt, mit innigen Ausdruck, sounds like it was lifted from Wagner's *Lohengrin*. Good enough for concert and experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in E Major, Op.31 appeared in 1916 and was subtitled *Fruhlingsquartett* (Spring Quartet) It sound not sound like it has anything to do with spring, unlike Shostakovich's No.1 also called Spring. The first movement, Freudig, is not particularly happy but is dry and daunting. The second movement, Pastorale, is less unpleasant. The third movement, Kraftig bewegt, is a scherzo not without a certain charm and is the best movement of this work. The finale, In fließender Bewegung, is a set of interesting variations based on a simple theme. This is a difficult work to play and not particularly satisfying.



Prince Heinrich XXIV Reuss of Köstritz (1855-1910), was born in the Prussian town of Trebschen. The Reusses were a large old German noble family with several branches and literally dozens of princes called Heinrich. There was even another Prince Heinrich XXIV, but he "of Greiz", hence the need for the lengthy name. Our Prince Reuss after initially studying music with his father, who had been a student of Carl Reissiger, took a law degree. However, subsequently he devoted himself to music, studying composition privately with Heinrich von Herzogenberg who introduced him to Brahms. Although Brahms never formally gave lessons to Reuss, according to the prince he gave the young composer numerous suggestions and considerable help which as far as Reuss was concerned almost amounted to the same thing. Though not a prolific composer, he did pen six symphonies as well as a considerable amount of chamber music, including five string quartets, two string sextets, three piano trios, a piano quartet, a piano quintet as well as and several instrumental sonatas. His style can be an amalgam of Brahms, Herzogenberg and to some extent Dvorak and Mendels-

sohn. His works were premiered to critical acclaim and were held in high regard for many years before disappearing from the repertoire. I am not familiar with his first three string quartets.

String Quartet No.4 in g minor, Op.23 No.1 appeared in 1904. It begins with a Poco sostenuto introduction which leads to the main section, a nicely conceived Allegro. The music has the quality and style of a Legend. The second movement is a brilliant and very effective Scherzo, Presto non troppo with a trio section. The third movement, Andante moderato, is a theme and set of variations. The work concludes with a bright finale, Vivace assai. This quartet can be warmly recommended to amateurs and could take an occasional concert performance.

String Quartet No.5 in E flat Major, Op.23 No.2 was composed immediately after No.4. The quartet is fresh and written on a generous scale, this is especially true of the opening movement, Allegro non troppo. The Intermezzo, Allegretto grazioso, serves as the second movement. It is charming and nicely written. Next comes an effective slow movement, Adagio non troppo. The finale, Vivace, tries to sound playful but unfortunately comes off sounding rather trite. Technically, it makes no great demands on the players, but I would still give it a miss.



Emil von Reznicek (1860-1945) was born in Vienna. He studied law and music simultaneously in Graz and pursued a career as a conductor at various opera theaters, including Graz and Berlin. Reznicek became known for parodying famous music by other composers. For example, his tone poem Schlemihl (a bungling loser) is a parody of Strauss' Ein Heldenleben. Today, Reznicek is remembered mainly for the overture to his opera Donna Diana. But the quality of his music was first rate. Unfortunately, he and his music fell into neglect from the Romantic era after the First World War and awaits rediscovery.

String Quartet No.1 in c minor which dates from 1883 is a very lucid and well constructed work. The first movement, Allegro con fuoco, has two melodic subjects. The march-like first theme is heavily accented and strongly rhythmic, while the second is sweet and lyrical. The middle movement is in sections beginning Andante tranquillo, then piu lento and finally Allegretto. Simply constructed but effective. The brilliant finale, Presto alla hongroise, is also in several sections. It begins playfully, is followed by a charming Piu moto ma gracioso section and then a short but piquant Presto. This Quartet is an impressive and very exciting work. It is the kind of work which will bring the house down. Professionals looking for a show piece should consider it. And amateurs will get a lot of fun from it

String Quartet No.2 in c sharp minor dates from 1921. The first movement, Allegro, begins with an robust theme which is developed through different meters and fugal treatment. A second subject is more lyrical and there is also a piquant third theme. The second movement, Andante mosso, begins mysteriously but gradually becomes more lyrical and charming. There is a fine contrasting middle section. A spirited scherzo, Allegretto, with lovely tonalities follows. The finale, Moderato, is built on a magnificent structure and features appealing melodies and rhythmic treatment. Good for concert or home.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor was completed in 1923. This Quartet is well put together, is tonally quite appealing, offering Schubertian melodies mixed with Hungarian episodes. The opening bars of the first movement, Moderato, immediately captures the attention. The second theme brings the Father's Song 'Good Sweepers, buy broomsticks' from Humperdinck's opera Hansel and Gretel. The Adagio, which comes next, creates a mood of calm but seamless tempi changes interrupt from time to time. Third comes a Molto moderato quasi andante which is an updated rococo Intermezzo full of good spirits. The work is crowned by a highly effective finale, Allegro, full of spirited themes. This quar-

tet combines modern developments with classical form. The part writing is first rate and all get good innings. A good concert choice and well within the range of experience amateur players.



Joseph Rheinberger (1839-1901) was born in Vaduz, the capital of Liechtenstein. At the age of 5, young Joseph was given piano and organ lessons from a local teacher. His talent was immediately discovered and was of such a substantial nature that with the help of a scholarship he was sent to the Royal Conservatory in Munich where he studied with Franz Lachner, one of Schubert's close friends and an important composer in his own right. Remembered today only for his organ compositions which are considered the most important ever written after those of Bach, during his life time Rheinberger was a much respected composer, generally ranked after Brahms and Wagner as the most important living German composer. Furthermore, he was also generally regarded as the leading teacher of composition during most of his lifetime. Among his many students were Humperdinck, Wolf-Ferrari, George Chadwick and Wilhelm Furtwangler. He wrote three works for string quartet

String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.89 dates from 1876. It is clear from the first notes of the huge, opening Allegro non troppo that this is a quartet which cannot be simply linked to the Viennese Classicists as part of their direct lineage. The style is quite individualistic with the music being dominated by the rhythm. At first there is a hint of mystery but then the music is almost transformed into an exotic oriental dance. The surprising tempo creates an unusual slackness. A fine Adagio expressive follows. The opening theme is hymn-like and elegiac. In the middle we find a brief intermezzo followed by a romantic duet between the viola and 1st violin. The slinky opening theme to the Scherzo non troppo vivo begins in unison. The theme thrown back and forth between the voices quite cleverly. The trio is a muscular affair which provides a good contrast to the main section. The viola introduces the rhythmically syncopated and restless opening theme to the finale, Allegretto. Again, rhythm rather than melody dominates and the forward motion is very convincing. Recommended to amateurs, maybe for concert.

String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.147 was composed in 1886. In the joyous opening theme to the first movement, Allegretto, the first violin carries the melody against important rhythmic elaboration in the other parts. The Adagio which follows is quite peaceful until the middle section when a more passionate second theme appears. The main theme to the third movement, Tempo di Menuetto, moderato, though it has a slight drag, is still full of swing. In the highly unusual trio section, the viola gives forth the melody in its lower register while the first violin plays a rapid series of triplets high upon its e string creating a tremolo effect. In the finale, Introduction & Fugue, Rheinberger creates what is surely one of the best fugues ever written for string quartet. The powerful and dramatic opening chords of the introduction Adagio non troppo immediately takes the listener's attention. However, the music then moves forward in a quieter, reflective manner, reminding one of Late Beethoven. Rheinberger's large scale fugue for quartet, though entirely different in mood from Beethoven's, nonetheless equals the virtuosity and compositional perfection of the Grosse Fuge. The fugue starts quietly in the 2nd Violin. The theme is merely four notes, a "cuckoo" motif, a call and an answer. Yet from this tiniest of beginnings great things spring. On this foundation, Rheinberger creates a magnificent edifice—437 measures long—in which his incredible compositional ability and skill is clearly displayed as he gives a lesson in the art of fugue. One is hardly aware of it because the thematic material is melodically attractive and rich enough to distract throughout much the fugue. Finally in the coda, the fugue is brought up short and interrupted with the opening 8 measures of

the Adagio from the introduction. A Con fuoco coda, based on the viola's entrance in the opening measures of the fugue, immediately follows and leads to a powerful close. This is an outstanding quartet. A good choice for concert and amateurs

Theme & Variations for String Quartet, Op.93 were composed in 1876. Wilhelm Altmann, one of the most famous chamber music critics of all time wrote "*The Theme with Variations for String Quartet, Op.93, is one of the grandest passacaglias ever written. No quartet society which prides itself on artistic programs should neglect it.*" The Theme and Variations is surely one of the most extraordinary and effective pieces ever written for string quartet. There is not a superfluous note. It is the cello playing solo which softly gives out the theme upon which the subsequent 50 variations are based. While none of the eight measure variations are repeated, the magnitude and tremendous scope of this work cannot but impress both listener and player. Rheinberger's highly sophisticated manner of treating a theme and variations is literally a compendium of techniques for composers which even surpasses Beethoven in this respect. A concert choice for sure and not at all difficult to play.



Ernst Friedrich Richter (1808-1879) was born in the German town of Gross Schoenau. He studied with Moritz Hauptmann and subsequently became a Professor at the Leipzig Conservatory. He was also appointed to the prestigious position of cantor of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig and most of his works are for choral voices. He wrote an important book on music theory which went through many editions. He wrote one string quartet.

His **String Quartet in e minor, Op.25** dates from 1860. It opens with a powerful Allegro vivace full of forward motion which captures attention immediately. However the opening motive is repeated to often and in the process loses its initial upon the listener. The second movement, Un poco allegretto, is like a scherzo and also has an appealing main subject. The third movement, A hymn like Andante comes third. One can imagine an organ playing this. The finale, Presto, is exciting and full of forward motion but it is also overly busy with some pretty difficult passage work if played up to speed. I should think not for concert but it can be recommended to amateurs.



Franz Xaver Richter (1709-1789) was born in the Moravian town of Hollerschau. He studied violin and composition and enjoyed a long career as a conductor and music director. He worked closely with Johann Stamitz in Mannheim and became one of the best known of the so-called Mannheim composers. The new style of the works of Stamitz, Richter and a few

other composers resident in Mannheim led to a change of musical style throughout Europe and ultimately influenced Haydn and Mozart who from it were to create the Vienna Classical Style. Just how many quartets he composed has not been definitely established. Only a set of six, his opus 5 has survived.

String Quartet in C Major, Op.5 No1 is the first of a set of six string quartets, which were composed in the late 1760's. The Op.5 quartets, and the first three in particular, are important in the history of chamber music and of the string quartet in particular. By the mid 18th century, players of the lower voices no longer were content to simply play the passive part of harmonic filler, essentially the successor role of the figured bass. Hence composers sought to create some kind of melodic interest in the lower parts. Richter in Op.5 No.1 shows how the problem could be solved and gives nearly as much thematic passage work to the viola and cello as the violins. In the first movement, Allegro con

brio, the viola and cello are given several solo episodes, extraordinary, if not unique, for this time. In addition, the lovely duet between the viola and cello has no precedent. Richter demonstrates just how far his thinking had advanced in that the bass is rarely used simply as a rhythmic beater and he never has the viola and cello double each other in octaves. Richter continues to show how the viola and cello could be used in each of the succeeding two movements, Andante and Rincontro, presto. While works from this period, today, are never considered great masterpieces, nonetheless, the best of them, such as this one, not only show from what foundation Haydn and Mozart were to build, and hence are of historical importance, but also are well-written and enjoyable to perform. Concert performance is justified for this reason and warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet in B flat Major, Op.5 No2 is the second of a set of six string quartets, which were composed in the late 1760's. Richter in the first movement, Poco allegretto, allows each of the instruments to share in the solos and delivery of the melodic material. Again the viola and cello are given several solo episodes which are the equal of the upper voices. The slow movement, Poco Andante is in the minor and is like an operatic aria. Particularly telling is the long solo in the cello and the nocturnal character of the music. The finale, Fugato presto, is a strict fugue and provides a fine contrast with lyrical movements which have come before. For concert and home.

String Quartet in A Major, Op.5 No.3 is the third of a set of six string quartets, which were composed in the late 1760's. The first movement, Allegretto, is particularly notable for the dialogue found in the development section which is one of the finest early examples of true string quartet style. The second movement, Andante, combines lyricism with virtuosic string technique. The finale, Tempo di Menuetto, is characteristic of works from this period which frequently ended with such a movement. The rough melody and rhythm provide a fine contrast with the lighter and melancholic trio section. For concert or home. I am not familiar with the last three quartets of this set.



Theophil Richter (1872-1941) was an ethnic German born in the Ukrainian town of Zhytomyr transliterated in the German as Schitomir. From 1893 to 1900 he studied piano and composition at the Vienna Conservatory, the later with Robert Fuchs. He eventually settled in Odessa where he taught piano at the Odessa Conservatory and served as an organist at the main Lutheran Church.

That he is remembered at all today is because he was the father of the famous pianist Swiatoslav Richter who claimed Theophil was his only teacher. He wrote one string quartet.

The **String Quartet in F Major**. It is written in the late Romantic style and one can hear the influence of Bruckner and Richard Strauss. The first movement opens with a gorgeous melody given out by the cello. This is a very fine movement. The Andante which comes next has a lyrical song like melody introduced by the first violin. Another very fine movement with very effective writing. Next is a first rate Tempo giusto a la valse, here sounding Russian, perhaps like Tchaikovsky or Arensky. The main theme of the finale, Allegro, in 6/8 is playful. It is backward looking and a bit orchestral. The slower second subject is very lyrical and romantic providing a nice contrast. This is also another well written movement. All of the voices are expertly handled. Fuchs taught him well. All in all a first rate work deserving concert performance and a work which amateurs will treasure.

Hugo Riemann (1849-1919) was born in the German town of Grossmehlra. He was widely regarded as one of the most important music theorists and musicologists of all time. Although he also was a composer, few know this. Most of his works were for piano, however, he left two string quartets.



Riemann's **String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.26** was completed in 1879 and is dedicated to the well-known violinist Jean Becker and the Florintine Quartet, which at the time was one of the most famous in Europe. The premiere was a success and for a while the quartet entered the repertoire of several string quartets, only disappearing after the First World War. In four movements, the work begins with a spacious,

Brahmsian Allegro molto moderato. The lovely thematic material is cleverly interwoven. A charming Intermezzo, Adagio non troppo sostenuto comes next and is followed by a Scherzo, allegretto con moto which captures the listener's attention by virtue of its quirky, syncopated rhythmic theme. The work concludes with a march-like Rondo, allegro risoluto. Perhaps strong enough for concert, and recommended to amateurs. I am not familiar with his second quartet.

Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838) was born in the German city of Bonn. His father taught Beethoven. In 1801 Ferdinand went to



Vienna, where he studied with Beethoven. He was on friendly terms with Beethoven most of the time though, like others, he had his contretemps with the great man. His music has the feel of Beethoven without quite the same mastery. Beethoven himself is said to have remarked of Ries "He imitates me too much," nowadays perhaps more of a commendation than a condemnation. Today, Ries is primarily remembered as a friend and student of Beethoven,

as well as his first biographer. However, during his lifetime and for much of the 19 century Ries was remembered as a fine composer and virtuoso pianist. He showed musical promise from an early age, studying both violin and piano with his father, and the cello with Bernhard Romberg before leaving for Vienna in 1801. There, he studied piano and composition with Beethoven for nearly 5 years after which he concertized throughout Europe for a number of years before settling in London and then finally retiring in Frankfurt. He wrote a considerable amount of music including several piano concertos and a large quantity of chamber music which was many years often performed and well thought of. Ries composed string quartets throughout his entire life, some 26 in all of which only 11 have been published at one time or another. The rest languish in manuscripts waiting to be rescued by some enterprising soul. That he wrote many more string quartets than he did piano sonatas, piano trios, piano quartets or other works with piano, is surprising for a virtuoso pianist and one is forced to conclude that he felt the string quartet to be a far more important medium than those with piano or at the very least he harbored real ambition to make an important contribution to it as had his teacher Beethoven. And like Beethoven, he took his time, trying other chamber music genres before turning to the quartet. His Opus 70 were his first, a set of three quartets composed in 1812 while he was touring Russia. He mailed them to his publisher but they were lost. Finally, in 1815 he sent them again and they were published in 1816 by C.F. Peters.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.70 No.1 begins with a dramatic and virtuosic Allegro, very showy, but not at all easy to play. The second movement, Air Russe, andante, has a drone-like quality, perhaps meant to imitate Russian Orthodox Church music, if so, it fails as it does not sound Russian at all. Third is a Menuetto allegretto with glissandi in the first violin part but other than this effect, the movement is unremarkable. The finale, an Allegro, starts off like a violin concerto. A busy movement, not easy to play or worth the effort. Give this quartet a pass.

It was the usual practice when quartets were published in sets three or six to put the strongest work first. However, **String**

Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.70 No.2 is considerably better than No.1. The writing is good and interesting for all players. The opening movement, a pleasant Allegro, calls to mind Beethoven's Op.18, in particular the second and third of that series. In the second movement, a charming Andante and engaging set of variations, though not so marked, we hear Ries and not Beethoven. All is masterly executed in this very effective movement. Next comes a Scherzo, allegro vivace, it is full forward motion, powerful in a Beethovenesque way but not particularly sounding like him. A rather slow trio provides fine contrast. The finale, Allegro molto, races at breakneck speed, full of excitement and élan, maintaining interest from start to finish but not that easy to play at speed. A great choice for concert instead of an Op.18 from Beethoven and recommended to amateurs. I am not familiar with string quartet nos 3 and 4, opp.70 No.3 and 126 No.1 respectively.

String Quartet No.5 in c minor, Op.126 No.2 is the second of a set which was published in 1824 but probably composed a decade earlier. The first movement, Allegro con spirit, does show the influence of Beethoven's middle period with its bursts of energy and episodes of lyricism. If the quartet was composed in 1813 it shows very good use of the cello for the time. Some of the runs are not easy, but this is an effective movement. The second movement, Adagio cantabile is also pretty good but there seem to be unnecessary quick runs in the first violin which had very little. In the middle it turns into a kind of waltz which last for a considerable amount of time and is much faster than the Adagio which returns at the end of the movement. It may be that it was meant to be two movements in one. That may be why there are only three movements. The finale, begins with a brief some what slow introduction leading to the main part, Allegro, which is exciting with a lot of nice touches and sounding a bit Beethovenian. Good enough for concert and also for home music makers. I am not familiar with string quartet No.6, Op.126 No.3.

His next set of three quartets were published in 1829 but were composed three years earlier. **String Quartet No.7 in a minor, Op.150 No.1**, The opening movement is quite interesting by virtue of its several tempo changes. The main sections are turbulent Allegros, but these are continually interrupted by calmer and more lyrical Andantino sections. The affect creates tension and excitement. The second movement is a beautiful, singing Adagio con moto cantabile. The Scherzo, allegro, which follows is certainly one of the most original in the literature. Its syncopated unisonal main section is quite extraordinary. The exciting finale, Allegro, makes a fitting conclusion to this fine work. Another good concert choice and also for home.

After hearing **String Quartet No.8 in c minor, Op.150 No.2**, one cannot but feel the unfairness of Ries merely being remembered today as a student and biographer of Beethoven. This quartet is clearly an example of why at least some of Ries' music deserves public performance and ought to be explored by amateurs and professionals alike. The opening Allegro 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 marvelous melody which sounds, as does the rest of this movement, as if had been written by Spohr, who by the way was born in the same year as Ries. The following Andante consists of a theme and set of 3 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 syncopated melody, has a brief but electrifying violin duet in their highest register. This is a satisfying work, entirely worthy of concert performance. And can certainly be recommended to amateurs as well. I am not familiar with String Quartet No.9 Op.150 No.3 or Nos.10 and 11, Op.166. To sum up, okay, Ries is not Beethoven,

but then who is. These quartets of his are very good in their own right and are warmly recommended for concert and home.

Franz Ries (1846-1932) was born in Berlin where his father, a leading violinist in that city, was his first teacher. He subsequently studied at the Paris Conservatory with Vieuxtemps and Massart. He enjoyed a career as a soloist until nerve damage to his hand forced him to abandon it. Subsequently, he worked as a composer and music publisher.



His **String Quartet in d minor Op.5** appeared in 1869. It shows the influence of Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn. In Ries' case this must come as no surprise as he himself was a violinist, the son of Hubert Ries concert master of the Royal Berlin Orchestra, and as a member for many years of the well-known Pariser String Quartet undoubtedly played the quartets of all of these composers. The opening *Allegro poco agitato* is turbulent and yearning. Next is a scherzo dominated by its rhythm. It is followed by a melancholy *Adagio*. The *Allegro molto appassionato* which closes out the work is dramatic and exciting. Not strong enough for concert, but can be warmly recommended to amateurs as it is not at all hard to play.



Henri-Joseph Rigel (1741-1799) was born in the German city of Wertheim. He studied with the Italian opera composer Niccolò Jommelli. In 1767, he moved to Paris where he remained for the rest of his life and changed his name from Heinrich to Henri. Virtually all of his compositions were written in Paris in the French style for French audiences. He primarily wrote operas but he did pen twelve string quartets in two sets of six. His **Op.10** is the second set and judging from the writing they appear to have been composed in the early 1770s. There were not a lot of French composers writing quartets during this period and those who did were writing so called *Quartet Brillants*, generally a show piece for the first violin with simple accompaniment in the other voices. They were generally vehicles for violin virtuoso. Rigel, however, was not a violinist and he wrote what he called *Dialogue Quartets*, which were meant to be conversations between the four voices. This was, in concept, what Haydn was doing at this time. But there is no indication that Rigel was familiar with Haydn's quartets and his sound nothing like them. Still, what he was doing was virtually unique in France for the time. I have played one and heard the others. They are easy to play, generally melodious and pleasant. Not for concert, but good for amateurs and students.



Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) needs no introduction. He is justifiably famous for *Scheherazade* and many other orchestral works. His chamber music is virtually unknown. He wrote two works for string quartet proper and a number of occasional pieces in collaborative efforts such as *Jour de Fete*, *Quartet B la F* and *Les Vendredis*

His **String Quartet in F Major** dates from 1878. It predates from his concentrating on creating a Russian School of Composition. As such, one would not immediately identify the work as Russian. Nonetheless, the work sounds good as is clearly constructed. And it is not hard to play. The first movement, *Moderato alle breve*, is not terribly inspired. The main subject is ordinary and is repeated too often before other material is introduced. The thematic material in the second movement, *Andante Moderato*, is not very memorable. The things sounds a bit like a homework assignment. However, the exciting

Mendelssohnian Scherzo which follows is rather good. The trio section provides an effective contrast. The finale, *Allegro con spirito*, is dominated by its rhythmic first theme presented in fugal fashion, but this cannot disguise the weak melodic material. Disappointing, despite one good movement.

In the Monastery is the last movement from his **String Quartet No.2** which he completed in 1879. Korsakov did not feel that the quartet merited publication. However, he decided to revise the quartet and after completely reworking it, he orchestrated it and eventually published the first three movements as his *Sinfonietta*, Op.31. The final movement, which has come down to us as *In the Monastery*, he also orchestrated and used in his opera *Sadko*. However, he allowed it to be published separately in a version for string quartet. It is a fugue on the song *Our Father* used in the Russian Orthodox church service, which is why the movement came to be known as *In the Monastery*. I found it rather boring. I cannot recommend it.



Pierre Rode (1774-1830) was born in Bordeaux. At one time, he was considered the greatest violinist in Europe. After studying locally, he went to Paris where he became a student of the famous virtuoso Viotti. He held many important positions, including soloist to Napoleon and the Tsar of Russia. Along with the famous violinists Rodolphe Kreutzer and Pierre Baillot, he was an author of the influential *Official Violin Method* of the Paris Conservatory. Rode, who was fond of string quartets, performed them frequently. Some sources indicate that he may have written as many as fifteen, although most of these were so-called *Quatours Brillants*, primarily a vehicle for the first violin. However, his four numbered quartets are for standard string quartet have decent part-writing for all.

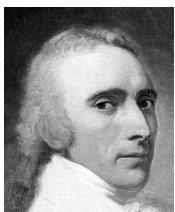
String Quartet No.4 in G Major, Op.18 appeared around 1810 but it sounds like it was composed several decades earlier. It is in three movements and begins with a lengthy, slow introduction *Adagio*. Unusual for the time, but not in French chamber works. The main section, *Allegro moderato* is a leisurely, genial affair. The middle movement, *Siciliano*, makes telling use of *pizzicato* passages which alternate with bowed sections. The finale, *Allegretto*, is pleasant, unassuming and melodious. Rode clearly intended this quartet for home music making. The quartet plays easily and presents no technical difficulties. Although it is historically important because it provides a window into French music making at the time, I still would not recommend it for concert performance. I am not familiar with the other three quartets from his Op.18, but frankly, there are just too many other works from this era which deserve your attention.



Jean Rogister (1879-1964) was born in the Belgian city of Liege. He became virtuoso violist, a string quartet member and composer who was trained in Belgium at the Liege Conservatory. He was strongly influenced by Cesar Franck. He wrote eight string quartets. I am familiar with two.

His **String Quartet No.2 in f minor** dates from 1914. It begins with a long *Lento misterioso* introduction which is sad and meditative but at times emotional. It leads to an upbeat *Allegro*. The music at times sounds like it might have been written by Franck although in fairness much of the thematic material is fresh and original sounding. A languid and romantic *Larghetto* comes next. The part-writing is good, noticeably so for the lower two voices. An attractive but very short and muted Scherzo is inserted before the finale, *Allegro*. It begins in a bouncy style reminiscent of Gounod's quartet writing. Before the charming coda, a version of the opening *Lento* interrupts the fluid flow of the music. This is a fine work deserving of public performance but also suitable for amateurs.

String Quartet No.6 c minor dates from 1928. In the 14 years which passed, Rogister's style completely changed. It might be called late-impressionist. There is the influence of Debussy but the tonalities are more daring. The opening Allegro is a prime example of this. They are wayward and writing quite dense. A short Allegretto, en style populaire is in a kind of neo-baroque style. It begins as a bright musette, sounding as if it were being played on open strings. It then morphs into a far more modern and lush dance. There is also a wandering, energetic trio. An ethereal theme, high in the violin register begins the Lent. At times reflective, the music travels through a series of eerie nether lands. The finale, Vif en bien rythmé opens frantically in what might called mid-phrase. The sense of urgency is quickly dissipated. What follows are a series of seemingly unrelated episodes, some fast others less so. Their relationship is only made clear toward the end which has a rather unusual conclusion. He is a composer who obviously knows how to write for quartet very well and who has something to say. Good for concert and also for experienced amateur players.



Alessandro Rolla (1757-1841) was born in the Italian city of Pavia. lives on as the famous teacher to whom Paganini was brought and who upon hearing the boy play is reputed to have said, "I can teach him nothing more." Anyone, who has either played or listened to Rolla's music, knows this story is unlikely to be true. Those who have not are in for a revelation, for without

Rolla and to a lesser extent Viotti, Paganini's musical idiom would be unthinkable. Paganini's music language is not original, it is Rolla's. More than just the origins of the magnificent music of Paganini's violin concertos can be found in Rolla's chamber music. Rolla wrote an incredible amount of chamber music perhaps as much as Boccherini. No standard reference source even gives a hint of the great quantity. While most of Rolla's chamber music remains in manuscript, a considerable amount was published during his lifetime. They all give ample evidence of how Rolla, in his compositional style, marks the passage from the so-called classical school of Haydn and Mozart to what is generally considered the Paganini model.

Beginning with the **3 String Quartets, Op.2** we find the music is rich in melodic surges, filled with trills, ornaments, and rapid passage work which is grafted on to the Italian bel-canto. The style is concertante, that is, each instrument in turn is given its chance to shine, while the others tastefully accompany, as an orchestra does in a Paganini violin concerto, rather than perform the task of purveying supporting harmonies. If you are looking for an Italian version of the Vienna classics, you won't find it here. What you will find are great melodies with bravura passages, especially in the first violin part, that are every bit as hard as those to be found in Paganini's concerti and string quartets. In this sense, there is a bit of the Quatour Brillant that one finds in the quartets of Kreutzer and Rode and in some of the quartets of Spohr. However, Rolla's quartets are not mere vehicles for the violinist to show off. The others do get rather substantial innings...and don't let the low Opus number fool you. No way are these Rolla's second effort. Op.2 No.1 is his 410th work! The Quartets date from 1823 and were published as Tre Gran Quartetti Concertanti. They all are in 4 movements and tempo-wise are similar: Allegro—Minuetto (Allegro)—Adagio—Allegro (or Polonaise). His six **Op.5** string quartets follow the same pattern. If you like the music of Paganini, you will like these quartets.

Andreas Romberg (1767-1821) was born in the north German town of Vechta and studied violin and composition with his father. He became one of the leading virtuosos of his time and with his cousin Bernhard Romberg, a cellist, toured throughout Europe. He eventually took a position at the Bonn Court Orchestra



where he met Beethoven. In 1815 he succeeded Louis Spohr as court music director to Duke August in Gotha. He eventually/ After many tours, he settled in Hamburg where he played an important role in its musical life. He wrote a total of 28 string quartets. I am not familiar with all of these but will discuss those I know. His **Op.1** are a set of three dating from 1794 and as such predate

Beethoven's Op.18 by seven years. They were met with considerable contemporary acclaim. For example, the respected Allgemeine musikalisch Zeitung wrote that they could stand comparison to the quartets of Haydn and Mozart.

But it is hard to posit this upon hearing **Op.1 No.1 in E flat Major**, which I do not think matches up even to an ordinary Haydn oeuvre from Op.55 or 65.

However, in **Op.1 No.2 in a minor**, the melody of the first theme to the opening Allegro and the use of the cello, as well as the other voices, leaves a more lasting impression. This is also true of the following Menuetto. The thematic material of the Andante is not particularly inspired but the finale, which begins in canonic fashion, is a little more interesting.

The main theme to the first movement of **Op.1 No.3 in F Major** is quite attractive but its treatment is only ordinary. The slow movement has a brief serenade section with the lower three voices playing pizzicato a la Haydn's Op.3 No.5 quartet. The following Menuetto is not bad but the finale is only average. In sum, keeping in mind that the Op.76 quartets of Haydn had yet to be published, I would say that while the part writing and structure of these quartets is fairly good, the thematic material is not as strong as Kozeluch or Pleyel at their best, and not even a match for an average quartet of Krommer or Paul Wranitzky, let alone Haydn. I cannot recommend these works for concert or home.

Op.2 No.2 in a minor is the second of a set of three composed between 1797-99 and published in 1802. By then, Romberg may well have had the chance to familiarize himself with Haydn's Op.76. The opening theme to the first movement is good but definitely sounds like something from one of Haydn's quartets. The excellent Menuetto, while not exactly a canon, still sounds somewhat like the minuet of Haydn's Op.76 No.2, the Quinten. Its trio section is also quite good. A lovely and original sounding melody graces the Andante variations which come next. The finale has a strong theme and several dramatic episodes which hold the listener's interest. Op.2 No.2 is much better than any of the Op.1. Perhaps for concert, recommended to amateurs.

Op.16 No.2 in g minor is from a set written in 1806. By then, Beethoven's Op.18 would have been known to Romberg. It is informative to remember that Onslow's first set of quartets, his Op.4, dates from this year. But in any comparison, Romberg comes off second best, and by a great distance at that. The opening Allegro is unmemorable and clearly awkward to play. The following Menuetto is a better movement but shows no advance over the Op.2. A short Grazioso is pleasant if unremarkable. The very short finale holds one's interest throughout its 2½ minutes, but it's a good thing it does not go on for any longer than that.

Op.30 No.1 in b minor is from a set composed in 1810. An Allegro moderato begins with a promising theme and the second theme is also pretty good, but the treatment of the material does not fulfill the initial promise. The main theme to the Menuetto is better than average and its trio very effective. While this movement makes a lasting impression, it must be admitted that Haydn or Mozart were writing such music in 1785. The Adagio is workmanlike but leaves no impression. The finale, Vivace, is pretty good, but again a good 25 years behind the times—perhaps the equal to a finale from one of Haydn's Op.71 or 74 quartets. Perhaps for home but not the concert hall.



Jean Roger-Ducasse (1873-1954) was born in the French city of Bordeaux. He was trained at the Paris Conservatory where he studied with Gabriel Faure and was said to be his star pupil. Subsequently he succeeded Faure as Professor of Composition and Paul Dukas as Professor of Orchestration. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor dates from 1909. It is a four note motto based on Faure's name. In four movements—Modéré, mais décidé, Pas vite et très rythmé, Très lent, Sur les lettres du nom Fauré. Lent - Vite. There are tremendous technical difficulties presented, not the least of which is intonation. This is an interesting work, very, very advanced for the time. One wonders what Faure made of it. Beyond amateurs and probably a lot of professional groups as well. Worthy of concert but it is a work requiring more than one hearing.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major was begun in 1912 but was not completed until the year before his death in 1953. To tell the truth, it is a bit of stretch to say that the quartet is in any key. In four movements—Tranquillo Presque lent is searching, tonally very wayward, as is the entire quartet. Not easy to follow what is going on. A Moderato is dominated by its rhythm and several percussive episodes. The Adagio which comes next has an air of mystery and attempts lyricism without success. The finale, Allegro maestoso, at times borders on the upbeat and is perhaps the most traditionally tonal of the four movements. I doubt it will appeal to many audiences and is too difficult for amateurs.



Julius Röntgen (1855-1932) was born in the German city of Leipzig. His father was a violinist and concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. His mother was a pianist. He showed musical talent at an early age and was taken to the famed pianist and composer, Carl Reinecke, the director of the Gewandhaus orchestra. Subsequently he studied piano in Munich

with Franz Lachner, one of Schubert's closest friends. After a brief stint as a concert pianist, Röntgen moved to Amsterdam and taught piano there, helping to found the Amsterdam Conservatory and the subsequently world famous Concertgebouw Orchestra. He composed throughout his life and especially during his last 10 years after he retired. Though he wrote in most genres, chamber music was his most important area. He wrote approximately 25 string quartets, none of which have opus numbers. I am familiar with four of these which are discussed below.

String Quartet in a minor was completed in 1874 at which time he was only 19 years old and had not completed his studies with Franz Lachner in Munich. Of his early compositions, including this quartet, the influence of not only Reinecke and Mendelssohn, but also of Robert Schumann can be heard. In later works up until around 1900 echoes of Brahmsian thought can be heard. Although Reinecke, to whom he showed the work, was pleased with it, Röntgen was not entirely satisfied with it and came back to it 11 years later, by which time he was an important musical figure in Amsterdam. The big opening Allegro has for its motto a two bar turbulent subject which is followed by a lovely, longer lined, yearning melody. The main theme of the Andante which follows sounds rather like a Scandinavian folk melody. And though not so marked there are variations and several dramatic climaxes on it which follow. Next comes an flowing and largely calm Intermezzo. Of the four movements, this probably received the most reworking. It is the kind of intermezzo Brahms and not Mendelssohn or Schumann might have penned. The finale, Allegro molto, is a rhythmically bumpy journey across a wide tonal panorama. An occasional concert performance is justified and warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet in g minor, subtitled 'Fancy' which is thought to be a reference to 17th century English polytonal works for gambas. It dates from 1917. The opening movement, Lento e sostenuto, is searching and for a good part polytonal, but in the middle there is a beautiful, pleading section of Schubertian lyricism. The second movement is a playful Presto leggiero, serves as a very fine scherzo. There is no trio section. Third comes a very interesting and original sounding Un poco allegretto with a strange tonality and pizzicato which at first gives it a fantastical mood. It eventually picks up speed and becomes a kind of second scherzo or perhaps an intermezzo. The finale, Allegretto, un poco tranquillo, starts off sounding rather like the preceding movement. Although there are many tempo and mood changes which keep the attention of the listener and create interest, there is a certain excitement one comes to expect in a finale. This is a completely tonal work, Röntgen was a tonal composer to the end though he often dipped into polytonality, but not so much here. Perhaps a concert performance, recommended for amateurs.

Röntgen wrote six of what he called Quartettinos in 1917. He may have written a seventh in 1931. The numbering is not clear nor are their dates of composition. These quartettinos, as the title would suggest are smaller works than a full scale string quartet. Most have only two movements. **Quartettino No.3 in F Major** dates 1917 but was revised by Röntgen in 1931. It opens with a charming Andante with the main subject given out by the first violin. The concluding movement Giocoso ed animato is quite lively beginning a fugal or canonical style. Good for concert where a shorter work is required. Amateurs too.

Quartettino No.7 in a minor came in 1922. For reasons I have been unable to discover, it is known as the Bauener Quartettino. In two movements, the opening Con moto ed agitato has a very brief slow introduction before a quick ditty takes over, a little like a catchy children's song. Now and then the slow intro reappears. The development is nicely handled. The finale movement, Allegro molto. Begins in canonical fashion. It is a kind of moto perpetuo. Nothing too deep here but effective. Again suitable for concert as well as amateurs.

String Quartet in C Major dates from 1925. It is in a neo-classical style. The opening Allegro con spirit is bright and upbeat. A very sunny and pleasing movement. In the lively Vivace which comes next and serves as the scherzo, pizzicato plays a prominent role. Traveling music. The Larghetto which follows, the mood is more subdued but not dark or sad. There is a kind of calm romanticism to it with a lovely middle section. The finale, Presto, begins as a fugue which then breaks open full of good spirits and forward motion. A good choice for concert and not beyond amateurs who will enjoy this work.



Joseph-Guy Ropartz (1864-1955) was born in Guingamp, Côtes-d'Armor in the French province of Brittany. He studied composition at the Paris Conservatory with Théodore Dubois and Jules Massenet, and organ with César Franck. He enjoyed a long career as both a teacher and a conductor. Ropartz was associated with the Breton cultural renaissance of the era, setting to music the words of several

Breton writers. His musical style was influenced by Claude Debussy and Cesar Franck. However he identified himself as a Celtic Breton rather than a Frenchman. He wrote in most genres and devoted considerable time to chamber music. Between 1893 and 1949, he penned six string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor was composed sometime around 1893. It is a massive and very interesting work, combining as it does the systematic use of chromaticism with remote modulations and Breton melody. The opening movement is divided into two sections. The first begins with a lengthy, slow (Lento) introduction. The cello presents a sad outcry quickly taken

up by the others. The main part of the movement, *Modéré* *animé*, has a restless and searching quality, characterized by its upward climbing chromatic passages that serve to build dramatic tension. At its height, a second, gentler and more lyrical subject appears. The second movement, *Vif*, serves as a scherzo. Based on a Breton folk melody, it is a nervous, edgy dance. The middle section is slower and exotic. The slow movement, *Assez lent*, starts off sounding mystical but quickly changes into a more straight forward romantic melody, albeit replete with chromatic chordal progressions. As a dramatic climax is built, the mysticism returns. The finale, *Vif et animé*, again has a Breton folk melody for its main theme. It sounds somewhat like a sea shanty. This is an original and engaging work which should be of interest to both professionals and experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in d minor dates from 1912. It begins with a dark *Grave* introduction which leads to a searching *Moderé*. It is difficult to follow the thematic material. The general mood is one of agitation. The second movement, *Assez vif*, begins with a rhythmic theme in the lower voices. The thematic material is disjointed, brusque, at times violent and very agitated. If it were movie music, one might imagine destruction and terrible things. Yet, through it all, one can hear some folk melody. The *Tres lent* which follows begins in fashion of what a scene looks like after a hurricane has passed through. It is sad and a bit down trodden. The easiest of the movements to play and listen to. The finale, *Anime*, starts off very upbeat, almost orchestral in scoring. Here it is possible to make sense of what is going on. This quartet, though nominally tonal, is highly chromatic and filled with dissonance. Perhaps an audience would find it interesting though probably not enjoyable. Beyond amateur players.

String Quartet No.3 in G Major was completed in 1924. The opening *Allegro moderato* makes an attempt at being pleasing. It is possible to follow the thematic material. Overall, it is not as jarring as what one finds in Quartet No.2. The nervous *Molto vivace* begins in more conservative fashion. *Pizzicato* plays in important part of what is going and there actually some nice lyrical episodes. All in all, a good movement. The *Lento*, which comes third, is relatively sedate and palatable. The finale, *Allegro*, is brisk and upbeat. By comparison to Quartet No.2, it is as if someone took Ropartz aside and said if you continue on like this, no one will care to listen to your music. This quartet could be brought into the concert hall but it is too difficult for all but amateurs who basically of professional standard.

String Quartet No.4 in E Major came in 1933. The opening bar of the *Allegro* starts like something out of the mid 19th century, but it is only one bar. The rest is pleasant enough in a modern sense. Tonal for the most part without any jarring dissonances. Another *Allegro* is in second place. *Pizzicato* is important. The movement is a cross between a scherzo and an intermezzo. Again dissonances have been eliminated. It is closer to the French Impressionists than to polytonalism. A *Quasi lento* comes next. There is nothing really quasi about it. The mood is of flowers slowly breaking through the earth. It is not exciting but kind of lyrical. The finale, *Allegro*, sports a kind of American modernism that was in vogue in the first part of the 20th century. Despite the lack of dissonance in this work, I did not find the thematic material either memorable or that interesting. I would not recommend it for concert. Experienced amateurs can manage this work.

In 1940, Ropartz completed his **String Quartet No.5 in D Major** subtitled *Quasi una fantasia*. It is in five movements. First is an *Allegro moderato*, not terribly interesting, for the most part not dissonant. Thematic material is forgettable. A very short canonic *Adagio* is placed second. It is quiet and nothing much happens. Boredom. The *Vivacissimo* which follows will wake you up after the *Adagio*. It is unobjectionable, but I would not say it grabs one in any sense. After this, we are treated to another *Adagio* which, like the earlier one, starts off in canonic fashion. It does not go anywhere and sounds a lot like the first one. The fi-

nale is an upbeat *Allegro*. It is possible in this movement to make sense of the thematic material. While there is nothing wrong with it, neither is there anything which says perform me.

His last quartet, **String Quartet No.6 in F Major** was finished in 1949. It begins with an *Allegro moderato*, quite possibly the most conservative movement since his first quartet. That said, the thematic material is not exactly riveting. A *Molto animato* is in second place. A lot of movement over very little of interest. The slow movement is a *Lento*. Soothing, perhaps for the lobby of a funeral home. The finale, *Allegro giocoso*, pretty unmemorable. Playing or hearing this is not particularly time well spent.



Jakob Rosenhain (1813-1894 also known as Jacques) was born in the German city of Mannheim where he studied piano with Jakob Schmitt and composition with Johann Kalliwoda. He was a child prodigy and continued on as a piano virtuoso at one point touring with Niccolò Paganini. He was widely considered one of the finest pianists of his day and after the death of Johann Nepomuk Hummel in

1837 succeeded him as Music Director (*Kapellmeister*) in Weimar. At the same time, he continued making tours, especially to Paris where he often took part in chamber music concerts, eventually settling there. In Paris, he befriended and impressed Cherubini, Rossini and Berlioz who helped to promote his music. Hearing him play, Mendelssohn remarked, "When Rosenhain plays we hear the music as it was intended to be played and not how the performer wishes to play it." His music was held in high regard not only by the musical public but also by composers such as Brahms who performed a Rosenhain piano concerto.

Although his **String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.65** was published in Paris by the firm of Richault in 1864, the date of composition, judging from its style, suggests that the quartet was composed perhaps as much as a decade, if not more, before its date of publication. While we have obtained the score, we have been unable to obtain a set of parts. However, the well-known and widely respected music scholar Eric Schissel has made our set of parts from the score. The first movement begins with a stirring *Allegro appassionato*. The cello gives forth the exciting main theme over the pulsing 8th notes of the other voices, beginning in its lower registers but slowly rising to a dramatic climax when the others join in. The second theme, equally lyrical, is gentler and somewhat delicate. The second movement, a lovely, highly romantic *Andante molto espressivo*, begins with a long cantilena theme in the first violin. It might be likened to a song without words. Next comes a Scherzo, *Allegro risoluto, ma non troppo vivo*. The first part of the main theme is dominated by its rhythm. The second half of it surprises as it turns into a south German *Ländler*. The contrasting trio is interesting in that a long-lined theme in the lower voices is accompanied by nervous running triplets. The main theme of the finale, *Allegro molto agitato*, is also characterized by its rhythm, creating the effect of a galloping, bumpy horse ride. The development uses the theme as an accompaniment to a more lyrical, singing second subject. Recommended for concert performance and to amateurs.

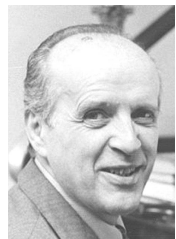
Am Abend, A Tone Poem for String Quartet Op.99 was composed in 1888. *Am Abend* (at evening) tells the story of a young man who has planned an assignation, a secret meeting in the forest, with his lover. It is in the form of a theme followed by eight variations each of which are subtitled and wonderfully describe his feelings. He enters the forest first, and after a while begins to worry, will she come. These thoughts lead to despair and daydreams of her. But just then, she appears and all is well. This very effective chamber music tone poem achieved almost instant popularity and led to Rosenhain's publisher requesting a version for orchestra as well. Good for concert and home.



Nikolai Roslavets (1881-1944) is one of the most important figures and a pioneer in the Russian modernist music movement, which became known as Russian Futurism. When you hear this work, and consider that it was composed during 1912-13, you cannot help but be amazed. Roslavets had a traditional enough musical education. He came somewhat late (1902) to the Moscow Conservatory where he studied violin and composition,

the latter with Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov, no modernist to be sure. Surprisingly, it took him 10 years to graduate (1912). But already by 1910, he was attracting the attention of Russian Futurist painters and writers. Influenced by the later works of Alexander Scriabin, Roslavets sought a new means of expression. Hard to believe but as early as 1907, he created what he called "a new system of sound organization" which was arrived at independently from and before Schoenberg's twelve-tone serialism. It does have several similarities and this led to Roslavets being referred to, as early as 1912, as "the Russian Schoenberg." However, Nikolai Myaskovsky and several other Russian composers, none of whom were modernists, pointed out the original nature of Roslavets' style, which owed nothing to Schoenberg. During the heady days after the Russian Revolution, Roslavets became one of the leading Soviet composers of the New Music Movement. But after Stalin's rise to power, his music was banned and he was considered an enemy of the State. Roslavets "new system of sound organization" for the most part consists of chords of six to nine tones. In the 1920s Roslavets developed his system further, expanding it to encompass counterpoint, rhythm, and musical form while elaborating new principles of teaching. Even in Roslavets' earlier works, those principles were already in use side by side with expanded tonality and free atonality. One finds them in his works as early as 1913.

His **String Quartet No.1**, composed in that year, provides an excellent example of this. Although the work is in one movement, there are eight sections within it which comprise the whole. Mood and tempi vary from mysterious to dramatic and from slow to fast and back again. This is an historically important and extraordinary work, certainly ahead of its time and highly modern with its use traditional tonality pushed to its very limits.



Nino Rota (1911-1979) was born in the Italian city of Milan. His real name was Giovanni Rota Rinaldi. He is mostly known as a composer for the cinema but he also considered himself a serious composer. He was prolific writing in virtually every genre from opera to chamber music. He wrote two works for string quartet. The first *Invenzioni per quartetto d'archi* which he completed in 1932, I am unfamiliar with it.

His **String Quartet** was composed over a six year period being completed in 1954. It is in three movements. The opening *Allegro moderato* is upbeat and charming, sounding a bit like Respighi's orchestra pieces, and the writing is rather orchestral. An appealing movement. The *Adagio non troppo*, which comes next, is sad and valedictory. The finale, *Allegro robusto*, again is orchestral. Full of élan and forward motion. Not beyond amateurs and worthy of concert.



Hans Rott (1858-1884) was a character to be sure. He once pulled out a pistol while riding a train to prevent a fellow passenger from lighting a cigar on the ground, he claimed, that Brahms, who disliked him, had hid dynamite somewhere in the compartment. Rott was Anton Bruckner's favorite student, of whom Bruckner had said "You will hear great

things from this man." Equally interesting might be what Gustav Mahler said upon hearing of Rott's death: "It is entirely impossible to estimate what music has lost in him. His genius soars to such heights... It makes him without exaggeration the founder of the new symphony as I understand it." Rott was born in a suburb of Vienna and studied at the Vienna Conservatory where he was friendly with Gustav Mahler and Hugo Wolf. He traveled in the same circles as they did and studied with many of the same teachers. As a student of Bruckner, he fell under Wagner's spell. This was to have an unfortunate result when in 1880 he submitted a symphony to Brahms in an effort to get it performed. Not only did Brahms reject it, but he told Rott he had no talent whatsoever and should give up music. Not long after, Rott plunged into depression and tried to commit suicide, ultimately going insane and then dying of tuberculosis at the ripe old age of 26. Mahler believed Rott was on the threshold of greatness when he died, which put paid to Bruckner's prediction that great things would be heard from him. In the event, nothing more was heard of him or his music, which quickly disappeared. It was only a century later that he was discovered when an English musicologist, researching Mahler's youth, came upon him and his music. Since that time, Rott has become a bit of a cult figure.

His **String Quartet in c minor** dates from 1879. It is not clear just how many movements the work has because several copies of the manuscript survive but none with all of the movements. One autograph manuscript has the 3rd, 4th and 5th movements while another has the 1st, 2nd and 5th movements. The opening movement is in three parts: *Einleitung*, *sehr langsam*, *Schnell und Feurig* and *Lento*. The slow introduction recalls the opening of Mozart's *Dissonant Quartet*, but certainly not tonally. An inquiring melody, sounding like disembodied late Beethoven played high in the violin register, is brought forth against a continuous pulsing ostinato in the cello's deepest register. Tension and dynamics build and lead to the explosive, frantic, almost over dramatic, quick section. It all sounds tonally very modern for 1879 to say the least. A tamer and more lyrical section then follows before the first two sections are allowed to reappear in various guises. Although there is much here which could not be called unusual for its time, there is also a great deal that is, in particular there are several prominent instances of dissonance which are very adventurous and which I think would certainly have shocked the likes of Bruckner if he had heard them. The second movement, *Adagio*, has a Brucknerian quality in its introverted character and meditative stillness, but not in its tonal language which is more traditional sounding. It does, however, share Bruckner's expansive style of phrasing. A short *Scherzo*, *allegro molto* comes next. It has a frantic, updated Mendelssohnian quality about it. However, the tonalities of the brief trio section, if it can be called that, are fairly advanced. Then comes a *Minuet*, *Allegretto*. It seems horribly out of place, starting out sounding like Haydn and then becoming Schumannesque. It certainly does not belong with the rest of work. The finale, *Sehr langsam*—*Lebhaft*, begins with a slow fugue which sounds as if it were composed by a baroque composer. The faster section is also fugal and blends in some Romantic tendencies. Yet, overall, it is backward rather than forward looking. Only toward the end does modernity creep into the music. In sum, the first movement, shows unmistakable signs of genius. The second movement is workman-like but not extraordinary. The *Scherzo* is quite well done but in no way remarkable while the *Minuet* is well below par and would be best left alone. The finale is also workmanlike, and certainly for a 22 year old, not to be despised. The powerful and original first movement makes the work worthwhile and historically interesting. Recommended for concert based on this extraordinary first movement. Experienced amateurs can manage it.

Miklos Rozsa (1907-95) for most readers probably brings to mind Hollywood and his career as a famous film composer.



Trained at the Budapest and Leipzig conservatories, Rosza, despite his great fame as a composer for the cinema, also pursued a career as a composer of concert music throughout his life. It was this fact which led him to title his autobiography *Double Life*. There he wrote, "My public career as a composer for films ran alongside my private development as composer for myself...two parallel lines, and in the interests of both, my concern has always been to prevent their meeting." He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1, Op.22 dates from 1950 and was dedicated to Peter Ustinov whom he met and befriended during the filming of *Quo Vadis* in Rome. In four movements, it opens with a quiet and reflective *Andante con moto* which slowly picks up speed and angularity. The tonal language we hear is that of Bartok and late Kodaly. The second movement, *Scherzo in modo ongarése*, is restless and rhythmically quite pointy. The trio section uses folk melody expressed through the filter of polytonality. The third movement, *Lento*, begins in a brooding mood with a sense of claustrophobic opaqueness. Gradually the music oozes forth like some thick liquid from under a closet door. There are vague elements of blues-like dissonance mixed with a passionate but very chromatically wayward theme. The introduction to the edgy finale, *Allegro feroce*, pounces forth without warning. Again, there is the influence of Bartok. Clearly Rosza rejected serialism for a very modern sounding tonality, sometimes expressed in polytonality. Worthy of concert, beyond amateurs.

String Quartet No.2, Op.38, also in four movements, dates from 1981. The opening *Allegro con brio* sounds like a continuation of the earlier quartet. Pounding, harsh and restless, it is nonetheless tonal but, not in the traditional sense. A limp and introspective *Andante* follows. Again we have a Hungarian *Scherzo all'Ungherese*. The main theme is played over a continual restless strumming by the other voices. The second theme is full of 20th century angst, but it does have a lighter quality which might pass as a kind of playfulness. This is the most immediately appealing of the four movements. The finale, *Allegro risoluto*, begins with a theme full of nervous energy whilst the second theme, much slower in tempo, is very atmospheric, full of mystery and suspense. Not for amateurs, maybe for concert.



Ludomir Różycki (1883-1953) was born in Warsaw. His father was a professor at the conservatory there and Ludomir received a thorough musical education there studying composition with the important late 19th century Polish composer, Zygmunt Noskowski. After graduating, he moved to Berlin where he continued his studies with Engelbert Humperdinck. He then pursued a career as both a conductor and teacher holding posts in Lvov and Warsaw. Along with Karol Szymanowski and Grzegorz Fitelberg, he was a founder of Young Poland, a group of composers whose goal was to move Polish music into the modern era. Although he was primarily known for his operas, he did not ignore chamber music, most of which was written during his so-called first period wherein his music remained traditionally tonal.

His **String Quartet in d minor, Op.49** dates from 1916 and is in three movements. The big first movement, *Andante-Allegro*, starts with a depressive introduction. One gets the sense something unpleasant has happened. The move upbeat *Allegro* sounds vaguely of Debussy. The middle movement, is quiet and subdued, but lyrical, like a warm day in the cemetery, laying flowers on the grave of a dead friend. The finale, *Allegro*, is a thumping Polish, perhaps Romanian, rustic dance. Quite nicely done. This is a worthwhile piece, good enough for concert and not so hard as to be unmanageable for experienced amateurs.



Edmund Rubbra (1901-1986) was born in the English town of Semilong in Northampton, England. He studied piano as a boy, eventually studying with Cyril Scott and Gustav Holst at the university of Reading and later at the Royal Academy of Music in London. For a while he pursued a career as a pianist in a touring piano trio. Later he taught composition at Oxford University. He wrote four string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in E minor Op.35 was composed in 1933 and dedicated to dedicated to Ralph Vaughan Williams. One hears the folk music influence that Vaughan Williams introduced into his own music. The first movement *Allegro moderato* has a quiet, searching quality.. The middle movement is *Lento* with a prominent viola part is dark hued and a bit eerie. The finale, *Vivace*, is the most interesting and features an intense conversation between the voices. I don't think a concert performance is indicated but it can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in E flat Op.73 was composed in 1952. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, is dark, sometimes yearning, occasionally threatening with angst. In the end, it dies away quietly. In the second movement, *Scherzo Polimetrico—Vivace*. Each voice has a different time signature and bar length, but there is a basic beat to the vigorous themes. This is a successful and exciting movement, a show piece. The third movement, *Cavatina, Adagio tranquillo*, is beautiful in a sad sort of way, at the bier of an artist perhaps. The finale is a dark and restless *Allegro* which morphs into a march before leading to a chorale. An interesting movement. Good enough for concert and amateurs.

String Quartet No.3, Op.112 was completed in 1965. The opening movement, *Largo ma molto flessibile - Allegretto*, begins with an air of mystery and the *Allegretto* is not exactly light hearted. The *Adagio* which comes next is grim. Image looking out of a grimy window at an overcast sky in dingy bedsit. The finale, on the other hand, breaks through all of this with its pulsing forward motion. While hardly a jovial affair, on the contrary, this is a scary ride through the dark night of the soul. A worthwhile quartet. Perhaps not an audience pleaser, but nonetheless should be given concert performance. Experienced amateurs may find it to their taste as well.

String Quartet No.4 Op.150 was dedicated to the British composer Robert Simpson. It is in two movements. The first is in two sections beginning with a wandering *Andante moderato ma liberamente* and a more interesting *Allegretto scherzando* with tremolos and pizzicato that sound original. The last movement *Adagio a con molto espressione*, a sad, turned down affair, full of resignation, without any excitement. An unusual way to end a quartet, but not ineffective. Not a great work, perhaps it could be programmed in concert where something short is required but the thematic material, except in the second section of the first movement, is forgettable. Not beyond experienced amateurs.



Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894) was one of the great piano virtuosi of the 19th century with a technique said to rival that of Liszt. He also gained renown as a composer and conductor. Rubinstein was one of those rare concert virtuosi whose contribution to music went far beyond performing. In 1862, he founded the St. Petersburg Conservatory and served as its first director. His efforts in developing

Russian musical talent were perhaps the greatest of any single individual. Not only did he introduce European educational methods but he also established standards that were as rigorous as any conservatory in Europe. While Rubinstein's compositions were extremely popular during his lifetime, after his death, they were criticized because they showed "no Russian influence" and were viewed as derivatives of prominent European contemporaries,

especially of Mendelssohn. Despite the fact that commentator after commentator has repeated this assertion, almost as if it were a litany, it is nonetheless not entirely accurate. Although he was not part of the so-called emergent Russian national school as led by Rimsky Korsakov, it is not true that there is no Russian influence to be found in his music. This influence is just not as pronounced as in the works of Borodin, Mussorgsky or of Korsakov himself. However, listeners to Rubinstein's String Quartet No.1, which dates from the mid 1850's, will not only hear the influence of Mendelssohn, but also hear Russian melody and rhythm of the sort used by Borodin and others 20 years later. Certainly the Presto, with its lovely trio in particular, sound quite a lot like the music Borodin penned in the 1870's. Rubinstein was a prolific composer writing, in nearly every genre. Chamber music figures prominently amongst his works. He wrote 10 string quartets. Critics were surprised that Rubinstein, despite the fact that he was a piano virtuoso, wrote skillfully for strings and it is beyond dispute that he mastered string quartet composition technique.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.17 No.1 begins with a lively upbeat Moderato with and impressive, lyrical second subject. The song-like second movement, Andante con moto, is very elegante. The Presto which serves as a scherzo is dominated more by its rhythm than any theme. The finale, Allegro moderato, begins passionately which has a more lyrical very appealing second theme. This quartet is well-written and suitable for amateur groups and perhaps an occasional concert outing.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor, Op.17 No.2 Moderato, begins with a dark but expressive fugue The spirited and syncopated accompaniment is quite effective. In the second movement, Allegro molto vivace, it is the tremendous forward motion rather than any theme which dominates. This is not at all an easy movement to pull off at the correct tempo. It sounds like it might have been more effective on the piano rather with a group of strings sawing away. The short third movement, Andante, played with mutes has an gauze like ethereal quality. The finale, Moderato, begins in an extraordinarily, perhaps ultra dramatic fashion. The impression is of too much sawing. The second theme is more lyrical and effective. Good for home, maybe perhaps for concert.

String Quartet No.3 in F Major, Op.17 No.3 the last of the set from the early 1850s begins The opening movement of No.3, Moderato is genial and pleasant and at times orchestral. The second movement, Allegro is a short scherzo-like movement is once again dominated by its rhythm and comes with a amiable, appealing trio section. This is followed by an Andante in Lied form with a dramatic middle section. The finale, Allegro moderato has a dance-like melody for its main subject and a lilting, lyrical second theme. Also good for concert or home.

String Quartet No.4 in G Major, Op.47 No.1 came out in 1857. While Rubinstein's first set of three quartets, his Op.17, showed little influence of his Russian homeland, this is not the case in his next three, the Op.47 which clearly do show such influence. The main theme to the first movement of Op.47 No.1, Moderato, begins with a dramatic and appealing first theme as well as a lyrical second subject is also quite pleasing. The music is well-written and beautiful sounding. The second movement, a pounding Allegro, is clearly a kind of Russian folk dance. The third movement, an Andante, opens with a beautiful and expressive viola solo, a lied in the form of a plaint. It is followed by a restless second section. The main theme finale, Allegro assai, is playful and somewhat trite downgrade what is otherwise a quite good quartet. In the second theme there are definitely echoes of Russian folk music. Still good enough to recommend to amateurs and if not for the last movement also for concert.

String Quartet No.5 in B flat Major, Op.47 No.2 opens with a Moderato con moto in which a warm-blooded melody given out by the cello. The other themes which follow are also quite attractive. In the second movement, Moderato, the main section has the quality of a folk dance while the trio section,

though not so marked approximates a waltz. The third movement, Moderato assai, is a set five of interesting variations of a simple theme. The second and fifth variations are particularly striking. The main subject of the finale, Vivace, is dance like but later is turned into an engaging fugue. A decent work which could perhaps be given in concert and recommended to amateurs.

The first movement of **String Quartet No.6 in d minor, Op.47 No.3** begins with a substantial, moody Adagio introduction where appears again in the middle of the movement and at the coda. The fetching main theme has a wave like surging motion and the development is even more sweeping. A slower and more lyrical second theme is elegiac. The second movement, Moderato, has for its main subject a catchy, Russian dance melody. A solemn Adagio molto serves as the third movement. The finale, Moderato, begins with a rough march-like theme followed by a very lovely, more lyrical second subject. Certainly for amateurs and maybe concert.

Two more quartets appeared in 1871 but may have been composed a decade earlier. This set of two or more concise and shorter than his previous quartets, each having only three movements. The first was **String Quartet No.7 in g minor, Op.90 No.1**. It begins with a rather chromatic but charming Moderato which at times becomes quite passionate. The second movement, Allegro non troppo is clearly meant to serve as the scherzo. Its rhythm gives the folk music like theme a Russian flavor. There are constant and frequent time changes which makes ensemble playing a real challenge, i.e., keeping together a real challenge. A deeply felt Adagio is third. The music of the concluding Allegro paints a picture of the Russian steppes and makes a strong impression. Worthy of concert and available to experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.8 in e minor, Op.90 No.2 dedicated to the famous violinists Joseph Hellmesberger, who for many years served as the concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic. Having played this quartet immediately after No.1, I noticed that the opening movement, Appassionato, perhaps because the quartets were written one after the other, bears a striking resemblance to the passionate sections of the first movement of the preceding quartet, and this colored my opinion of it. The middle movement, Allegro non troppo, is a dance-like scherzo not bad, but the trio section is rather ordinary. The finale, begins with a Moderato introduction which then reappears to interrupt the following Allegro assai on several occasions. Not as strong as Op.90 No.1.

In 1881, another set of two quartets came out. The first was **String Quartet No.9 in A flat Major, Op.106 No.1**. The were dedicated to Jean Becker, the first violinist of the then famous Florentine Quartet. The opening Moderato is appealing. The Con moto moderato which follows is full of power and forward motion but has a lovely and more relaxed middle section. Next is a straight forward and pretty Moderato assai. The finale, Allegro, opens full of fire and is followed by a nicely contrasting choral section. Good enough for concert but not an easy work to play and probably beyond all but the most experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.10 in f minor, Op.106 No.2 has for its first movement, Moderato, a Russian sounding melody in the form of a legend. Next is an Allegro vivace in the form of a mazurka with a waltz-like trio section. The Adagio in third place has a religious aura to it. The finale, a Moderato, is decent. Not as hard as No.9 but not easy to keep together either.



Philipp Rüfer (1844-1919) was born in Lütlich, a village in the Eifel section of Belgium, which has an ethnic German population. He studied composition at both Liege and Leipzig Conservatories and pursued a career as a teacher. He wrote two string quartets.

His **String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.20** dates from 1872. An energetic Allegro con brio, at times quite dramatic opens affairs. The syn-

copated rhythmic accompaniment to some of the themes is unusual and interesting. The Presto which follows has a Beethovenian quality. Its trio section has an appealing melody played over cello double stops giving it a bagpipe effect. The slow movement, Adagio sostenuto, has a noble melody for its main theme which rise to dramatic climaxes. The finale, Allegro vivace, is a stormy affair. A decent work which can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major, Op. 31 followed ten years later in 1882. The Allegro which opens the work has two lyrical, appealing themes which are very different from one another and provide a stark contrast. A simple but beautiful sounding Adagio follows. Third is a fleet Scherzo with a waltz like trio section in which the cello once again is given a part made to sound like a bagpipe. A march like finale, Allegro concludes the quartet. Also good for amateurs, probably not for concert.



Johann Rufinatscha (1812-1893) was born in the town of Mals in the South Tirol, then part of Austria but since 1919 part of Italy. He studied violin, piano and composition at the Innsbruck Conservatory and then moved to Vienna where he took further studies with Simon Sector, who also had taught Schubert toward the end of his life. Thereafter he worked primarily as a teacher. At

one time, it was predicted by contemporaries that he would be remembered as one of Austria's major composers. This was the result of a number of symphonies he composed, which were highly praised, during the same period when Brahms had stopped writing symphonies. He is said to be a link between Franz Schubert and Anton Bruckner. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in E Major dates from 1850. It opens with a genial, sunny Allegro Moderato with an air of romanticism one associates with early Schumann perhaps. The Adagio that follows is relaxed with an attractive and gentle theme that is devoid of angst or tragedy. The unusual third movement begins like a scherzo with a syncopated theme which quickly gives way to a gentler melody. The two themes are then repeated three more times before the first theme has the last word. The Allegretto finale begins in jovial fashion but quickly turns more dramatic and darker and then becomes lyrical and optimistic. The movement overflows with musical ideas but not are really developed. The writing is quite good but the melodic material is not really memorable. Still, a decent work which might please amateurs.

String Quartet in G Major came twenty years later in 1870. It begins in very romantic fashion with a hesitant Adagio introduction which leads to a bustling rising main theme followed by a secondary melody which makes a stronger impression. A sad, brooding Adagio full of resignation and despair is second. The Scherzo includes two restless themes strung together, while the more graceful theme of the trio provides a welcome contrast. The cheerful finale moves forward with considerable energy but lacks any real sense of drama. The writing for all is good, no real technical difficulties and the melodies are appealing when heard, but they leave no lasting impression which is why I cannot recommend this work for concert, but I think amateurs will enjoy it.



Jakub Jan Ryba (1765-1815) was born in the Bohemian villate of Presnitz (now Přeštice) then part of the Austrian Empire. In 1780 he was sent Prague to become a teacher but was also taught music. He worked as school teacher but also composed. Most of his works were church music. He appears to have written at least two string quartets because on the one string quartet which as survived to receive a

publication, on the manuscript of the first violin part is written in his handwriting, second quartet.

String Quartet No.2 in d minor dates from 1801. It opens with a somber and powerful Adagio, half way between Bach and late-Beethoven. It is 3/5's the length of this slight, but effective, three movement work. An undistinguished Menuetto with a very clever pizzicato trio follows. There is no da capo. The quartet concludes with an engaging and well-conceived Scherzo allegro. Amateurs will enjoy this little classical string quartet.



Joseph Rylandt (1870-1965) was born in the Belgian city of Bruges. Although he studied philosophy and law at university, however, he studied privately with Edgar Tinel, at the time one of Belgium's most esteemed composers. After his studies, being of independent financial means, he was able to devote himself to composing, although later serving as a teacher at the Conservatory of Bruges. He wrote a number of string quartets in his youth which have not survived. The one string quartet which has survived is from his middle age.

String Quartet No.2 in f minor dates from 1903. The powerful opening Allegro moderato virtually explodes forth just short of violence. It is riveting. Second is an Andante, lyrical and romantic but there is an underlying dark restlessness which follows. Next is an Allegro con fuoco in which the viola presents the main theme over the tremolo of the others. There is an ominous atmosphere. It is a restless scherzo. The finale, Allegretto, is bright and almost playful. To me, it seems out of place. Given what has come before, one expects a dramatic conclusion the powerful music which has come before. It is a bit of a letdown and for that reason, I am not sure this would be a candidate for concert, although amateurs will find it interesting.



For many, it may come as a shock to learn that **Camille Saint-Saëns** (1835-1921), the famous orchestral composer, devoted a great deal of time and effort to writing chamber music. Among these works are two string quartets. Interestingly, Saint-Saëns did not attempt to write a string quartet until he had reached the ripe old age of sixty four.

His **String Quartet No.1 in e minor, Op. 112** dates from 1899. The Quartet was dedicated to the famous violinist Eugen Ysaye, whose quartet premiered it. It was hailed as a masterwork of the French quartet literature, which stood in contrast to what many chauvinist critics called the foreign tainted school of Cesar Franck, a Belgian. The opening movement, Allegro, begins with a nostalgic singing melody which dissolves into an energetic and angst-ridden piu allegro. Suddenly, out of this comes a fine lyrical melody first given out by the cello. As interesting as it is, it is by no means easy to play. The second movement, Molto allegro quasi presto, stands out as a tremendous tour de force. It opens with a syncopated melody in the minor. Repeated at the same tempo but with shorter notes, it sounds twice as fast. The development keeps up the break-neck speed until, at last, a fugue is reached. No slower than what has come before, it is more powerful and constantly thrusting forward. A reflective Molto adagio follows. It is a complete change of pace. A long-lined, wistful violin melody holds center court for a great while before a more turbulent section makes its appearance. The finale, Allegro non troppo, has a bit of the feel of the second movement, though it is more relaxed and not so feverish. However, its use of varied rhythms does create an underlying sense of restlessness. This is a quartet more suitable for professionals looking for a powerful and original work from the late French Romantic period. However, most amateurs will not find this an easy to get through.

String Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.153 was composed toward the end of his life in 1919. It is a work completely differ-

ent from No.1. Though 84 years old, it sounds more like the work of a young man. Although written on a relatively small scale, it only has three movements, it is written with great mastery and exhibits exemplary clarity of thematic material. Clearly, Saint-Saëns was neither trying to scale the heights nor plunge to the depths of emotion in this work. To the contrary, he seems intent on writing a sunny, playful work--extraordinary, really, for an octogenarian. The first movement, Allegro animato, begins in the form of an introductory fanfare. The main theme has the perfume of Mozart about it, of course, in an updated, neo-classical style. The second movement, Molto adagio, has traces of North African melody and of harmonic motion that he almost certainly came across during his many trips to Algeria and Tunisia. The last movement, Andantino--Allegretto molto, is quite light-hearted with several short, scurrying fugues that bear witness to the fact that Saint-Saëns must have enjoyed writing this music. Certainly a good choice for concert and recommended to amateurs, much easier to navigate than his first.



Vadim Salmanov (1912-1978) was born in the Russian city of St Petersburg. He was trained as a geologist, a profession he practiced until the end of WWII. He was, however, professionally trained in music as well, studying composition with Mikhail Gnessin and Maximilian Shteinberg, Rimsky Korsakov's successors at the Conservatory in Petersburg. He wrote six string quartets

String Quartet No.1 in f minor was composed immediately after WWII and apparently reflects memories of the composer about it. The short first movement, Grave, is slow, strident and intense. There is certainly the air of death and resignation about it. The Allegro molto which follows has a harsh striving quality of forward motion mitigated by brief gay interludes sounding vaguely of Aram Khachaturian. Next is an Andante, which opens softly and hauntingly, perhaps like the scene of a battlefield after the battle is over. A disembodied melody oozes forth as a eulogy. A turbulent middle section provides a riveting contrast. In the last movement, Allegro con fuoco, Maestoso, one hears faint echoes of Shostakovich. The writing and musical thought are both captivating and first rate. This is a quartet which professional groups in the West would do well to investigate.

String Quartet No.2 is, on the whole, more peaceful than his No.1. The opening Andante molto poetico begins with a gentle theme in the violin, it often moves into the high register. Later an intense chordal passage is injected, however it only brief. The second movement, Allegro, begins with a pizzicato accompaniment and the violin is very agitated sounding of Shostakovich. Settling into a rhythm, the two violins propel the music forward. This movement contains music of great beauty, together with some aggressive strident passages. The final movement, Mesto, starts with a solo cello in the low register. The mood is somber mood. There is a touch of atonality. A possible concert choice, not beyond good amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in D Major dates from 1961 and is in two movements. In the 15 intervening years, Salmanov had made an extensive study of 12 tone music and had rejected its tenets. However, he was attracted to serial technique which he found did not limit his means of artistic expression. The opening Allegro molto clearly shows this advance over the earlier work. Traditional tonality is far less in evidence though by no means absent. This is an angular, harsh movement. The concluding Andante--Allegro comodo begins languidly on a funereal note and is decorated with grotesque pizzicato glissandi. The writing is both atmospheric and effective. Only toward the very end does the Allegro section begin, at first gay, but then harsh. The closing major chords give the it some sense of affirmation. Very difficult to play, not for amateurs, but it does merit a concert performance.

String Quartet No.4 in G Major dates from 1964 and displays an even greater use of serialism, In four movements, it certainly is hard for the listener or player to hear how the quartet is in the key of G or any key. The opening Allegro non troppo is the most accessible movement with a definable, perhaps even elegant melody albeit in a very modern way. The opening trill of the succeeding Allegro leads to a harsh and strident series of episodic sound clusters. The last two movements are played attacca. A lengthy Adagio is polyphonic and meditative. It is followed by an Allegro molto which in its ferocity provides a stark contrast. Except for the opening movement, I found this piece less attractive than his first three efforts.

String Quartet No.5 was completely given over to his experiments with the 12 tone system. In **String Quartet No.6** from 1971, Salmanov retreats from this somewhat. The opening Andante semplice wanders a bit but it is possible to follow the searching themes. The second movement is a wild and very impressive Allegro con brio, absolutely first rate. Not easy to play for sure. Third comes an Andante espressivo which is lyrical and in a modern way has echoes of Russian orthodox music. The finale, Allegro vivace features a number of moods. Interesting is perhaps the word which describes it best. It could be presented in concert, but is probably beyond all but the best amateurs.



Gustave Samazeuilh (1877-1967) was born in the French city of Bordeaux. He studied music with Ernest Chausson until the latter's death in 1899, and then attended the Schola Cantorum de Paris, where he became a pupil of Vincent d'Indy and Paul Dukas. He was also much influenced by works of Debussy. He wrote one string quartet.

This was his **String Quartet in d minor** which was completed around 1900 but not published until a decade later. It was dedicated to Paul Dukas. The opening movement begins with a substantial, slow introduction, Assez lent in which the motiv or motto a la Cesar Franck, is stated. This motiv is sad, but not overly so. The music has a pleading quality to it. The main section Anime makes a very interesting use of this motiv. It is presented in the cello over tremolo in the other voices. It is very well done and effective. The second movement, vif et leger, which serves as a scherzo, the motiv is presented in varying rhythms so that it is at times barely recognizable. This is an absolutely outstanding movement. In the slow movement, Lent et sostenuto, is highly lyrical, romantic and of great beauty. The finale, Gaiement et pas trop vite, combines the motiv is presented front and center. There are some unusual pizzicato effects. The main theme is upbeat and appealing.. This quartet is the equal of any French quartet composed between 1890 and 1914. If it is not a masterwork, which I believe it to be, it comes close indeed. Highly recommended for concert and to experienced amateurs.



Adolf Sandberger (1864-1943) was born in the German city of Wurzburg. He studied composition with Josef Rheinberger at the Munich Conservatory and subsequently pursued a career as a composer, teacher and musicologist. He wrote two string quartets. I am not familiar with the first.

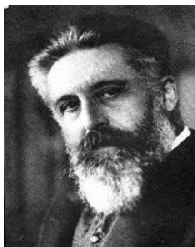
String No.2 in e minor, Op.15 dates from 1899. The opening movement, Energetisch, doch nicht zu rasch, features a great deal of fresh sounding and appealing thematic material, much of which is given to the cello, whose part here is rather difficult. The second movement, The second movement, Langsam, is quite lyrical and is followed by a rather antiquated in style Minuet. Sandberger was particularly interested in music before the baroque era and this would be the reason why he inserted such a minuet. The finale, begins with a

moderately slow introduction, the main section Rasch has a march-like subject for its main theme and a powerful, triumphant hymn for its second and final subject. This is a good work which could be brought to concert and recommended to good amateurs.

Julius Schapler (1812-1886) was born in the north German town of Graudenz in Pomeranian. He studied cello with the famous cellist Bernhard Romberg and pursued a career as a principal cellist in several German orchestras.

His **String Quartet in G Major** dates from 1840. It took first prize in the prestigious competition held by the Composers Society of Cologne and subsequently became known as the Prize Quartet. The judges for the competition were four prominent composers, Peter von Lindpainter, Louis Spohr, Carl Gottlieb Reissiger and Johann Kalliwoda. Robert Schumann also praised the work and called Schapler an original talent. Perhaps Schumann had been drinking too much when he wrote this and it is hard to know what the competition was like for this quartet is not worthy of concert performance. And the thematic material is rather spiritless. Perhaps the quartet won its prize based on its format and structure or because Schapler was one of Germany's leading cellists at the time. So even though the words Preis Quartett boldly appear on the title, give this one a miss.

Very little information is available about the German composer **Nicolas Albert Schaffner** (1779-1860) He was born in Silesia, possibly Breslau, and trained as a violinist and was considered a fine performer. In 1817 he moved to France where he remained for the rest of his life. He worked as a theater director in Rouen, Bordeaux and Paris and apparently was an active chamber music performer. Sources indicate he may have written as many as 11 string quartets. All but one of these were published in Paris. His Op.57 was published in London. I can remember, in my youth having the opportunity to play some of these works and having enjoyed them, but I have not done so recently



Philipp Scharwenka (1847-1917) was born in the town of Samter near the city of Posen then part of Prussian Poland. He moved to Berlin in 1865 to complete his musical education. A good pianist, he primarily devoted himself to composition and teaching at several of Berlin's leading conservatories, finally joining the faculty and serving as director of the conservatory founded by his older brother, Xaver. Otto

Klemperer was among his many students. During his lifetime, his orchestral compositions were featured regularly in German concert halls, but the common consensus is that his chamber music was his best work. Besides several instrumental sonatas, he wrote two string quartets Both of these are late German romantic era works were written within a short time of each other, around 1910, which by that time was certainly a retrospective style. The appearance of these works in 1910, rather than say in 1890, no doubt played a role in their not receiving the attention they should have for they are very accomplished works.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.117 begins restlessly with a somewhat Mendelssohnian Allegro moderato. There is no sense of tragedy or doom, but of striving, tinged with melancholy. The second theme is more hopeful and unhurried. An engaging fugue is made out of the first theme. The short and spirited second movement is in the major. Marked Intermezzo, allegretto vivace, it is actually a scherzo without a real trio. The beautiful third movement, In memoriam, Andante tranquillo, is not at all funereal but more in the nature of a romanza. The finale, Allegro ma non tanto ma con spirito, though a little livelier than the first movement, more or less shares the same mood. There is much to be said in favor of this quartet—fine writing, good ideas, all well executed. That it does not reach the highest

rank is perhaps due to the fact that the ideas, good as they are, lack a certain spark of originality.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major Op.120 begins with a restless Allegro moderato that conveys the forward motion of travel. The short second movement, Tempo di minuetto, bears no resemblance to a minuet other than it is in 3/4 time; a cross between an intermezzo and a scherzo, there is no trio. A lengthy, sad and searching Andante tranquillo e mesto follows and would have made a more suitable memorial than the one found in the First Quartet. Here the writing reaches the very highest standard. The finale, Pastoral, Die Kohlhasenbrücker Fuge is not pastoral, but a kind of boisterous rustic dance, lively and quick. With the exception of the absolutely first rate slow movement, my comments with regard to his First Quartet apply also to this work. Both of these quartets can be warmly recommended to amateurs. I am not sure that they deserve concert performances, given so many other more deserving works are already standing in line to be heard.



Paul Scheinpflug (1875-1937) was born in the town of Loschwitz not far from the German city of Dresden. He studied violin and composition at the Dresden Conservatory, the latter with Felix Draeseke. Thereafter pursued a career as a conductor, holding positions in Bremen, Königsberg and finally Dresden. He also served as a concertmaster in Bremen and was in a string quartet there. He was not a prolific composer but his

chamber music was highly praised. His style was that of the late romantic movement. He wrote one string quartet.

String Quartet in c minor, Op.16 appeared in 1912. Few quartets are superior in emotional intensity and sense of climax. The opening movement, Allegro agitato, is classical in form. The entire movement literally bursts with passionate desire for life by one who is threatened by death. There is an internal struggle. At times there is a feeling of hope then feelings of hopelessness. At last the comforting voices of the Night bring respite. The development section begins with a funeral march and in the coda there is huge, but indecisive struggle between life and death. The second movement, subtitled Lithuanian Barcarolle combines an Adagio with a Scherzo. The rhythm is that of the barcarolle while the mood is filled with the melancholy spirit of that broad watery land with its lonely dunes and blue villages peopled with enigmatic inhabitants. The finale, Allegro energico, is dominated by its powerful rhythms. It literally bursts forth from the explosive opening chords, quickly turning into an inexorable Totentanz, a dance of death. This is an extraordinary and stunning work. It is, in my opinion, a masterwork which will serve as an adornment to any professional group's repertoire. It cannot fail to bring the house down. And though it is not a work for beginners, it is by no means beyond experienced amateurs



Peter Schickele (1935-) was born in the American town of Ames in Iowa. He studied composition at Swarthmore University and then later with the American composer Roy Harris. Besides composing music under his own name, Schickele has developed an elaborate parodic persona built around his studies of the fictional "youngest and the oddest of the twenty-odd children" of Johann Sebastian

Bach, known as P.D.Q. Bach. He would find the fictional composer's "forgotten" repertory supposedly "uncovered" farcical works as The Abduction of Figaro, Canine Cantata as well as many others. Few knew he was a very accomplished serious classical composer. He has written five string quartets. I am familiar with three of these.

String Quartet No.1, subtitled *American Dreams*, dates from 1983 and was commissioned by the Audubon Quartet. There are several kinds of American music to be found in the work, generally transformed or presented from a distance, but which nonetheless give the quartet an unmistakably American feel. Each of the five movements bears a title. Schickele notes that the melodies of the Opening Diptych, which makes extensive use of harmonics and pizzicato, sounded Appalachian to him. The unusual second theme is a long striking plucked solo for cello. It is clearly related to the blues. The second movement, *Four Studies*, is inspired by jazz, but also shows the episodic influence of be-bop, fox trot and the blues. Music at Dawn presents as its main subject, a birdsong. This is a tip of the hat to the Audubon Quartet (named after the famous ornithologist). The next movement, *Dance Music* borrows from fiddle music of the square dance and from the Navajo Indians, the latter which is turned into a kind of waltz. In the finale, *Closing Diptych*, the themes from the first movement are reintroduced, this time in reverse order. This is an absolutely first rate work which ought to be taken abroad by every touring American string quartet. It is full of gorgeous melodies, easily accessible to audiences without pandering, and does not sound beyond the means of good amateur players.

String Quartet No.2 *In Memoriam*, written in memory of his sister-in-law's husband, Russian dissident writer, Kiril Uspensky. Completely tonal, the first movement uses harmonics to suggest the tolling of bells. The second movement is a Scherzo. There are also allusions to Haydn's *Lark Quartet*, Op.64 No.5, in honor of the American ensemble of that name, the *Lark Quartet*, who commissioned the work. The finale opens with repeated mournful cello figures, the mood is one of intimate gravity. In some ways more modern sounding than the other two quartets discussed here, it is nonetheless quite accessible and enjoyable.

String Quartet No.5, subtitled *A Year in the Country*, dates from 1998. Schickele, who mostly resides in New York City, relates that he and his wife were able for the first time in twenty years to spend the better part of a year at their country home in upstate New York. During this time he composed his fifth quartet and gave it the subtitle. Each of the eight movements has a programmatic title. *Spring Dawn* begins the work. The quiet, subdued main theme is repeated in many forms over and over, creating a hypnotic effect. One can imagine lazing on a porch early in the morning staring across some grass as the day gently unfolds. Two short scherzi, entitled *Birds and Bugs*, follow. The first scherzo is rather hectic, more reminiscent of some big city rush hour than of birds in the country, its brilliant short trio is not more evocative of things avian. Although the main part of *Bugs* is played entirely pizzicato, it is the brief bowed trio which successfully conjures up insects. A slow elegiac movement, *At John Burroughs' Grave*, follows. The grave of the well-known naturalist is not far from Schickele's home and a favorite place of his to visit for a quiet rest. The lovely music is somber but not funereal. There is a long, lovely solo for the viola. The music, which in part has the quality of a New England church hymn, is a fine memorial. The shortest movement, barely a minute, in length is entitled *Leaves*. It begins with a loud, pronounced slow jazzy theme which is not developed but leads immediately to the next movement, *Three Fiddles*. It is definitely fiddle music, mostly restless. Schickele writes that the idea for the music came from all the fine classical, jazz and country violinists who come to a nearby annual music festival. By the *Ashokan*, was inspired by the composer's frequent walks along Ashokan lake, not far from his country home. Here the music is evocative of a lovely stroll, tender and melodious. The finale, *Winter Goodnight*, follows without pause. It is valedictory, quiet, a little mysterious. The dense chordal scoring brings the organ to mind. Though programmatic, the music is by no means "lightweight". Rather we have a mature masterpiece by an extraordinary talent. Highly recommended.



There is one word which can sum up **Max von Schillings** (1868-1933) both musically and politically: Wagnerite. At the age of 14, he was taken to a performance of *Parsifal*. Years later he was to write, "I was overwhelmed by the dimensions of this work...of its mysteries and lonely grandeur...reverence for its creator was instilled deep within my young soul!" He took as his motto, "What Wagner does, is well done," and took as his goal to be a second, and if possible, better Wagner. Like his idol, he was an avowed anti-Semite and enemy of the Weimar Republic. During his lifetime, some included him along with Richard Strauss and Engelbert Humperdinck, as playing an important role in the renaissance of German opera during the early 20th century. Schillings studied violin, piano and theory as well as jurisprudence, philosophy, literature and art history. He made a name for himself as a teacher and conductor, holding several important posts including that of director of one of Berlin's leading opera companies. He championed the works of such composers as Pfitzner, Schreker, Busoni and Richard Strauss. Wilhelm Furtwängler numbers among his students. Schillings wrote only one string quartet.

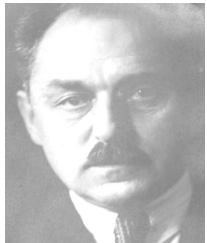
The **String Quartet in e minor** is a big work originally composed in 1887, but only published after being reworked in 1906. The lengthy, diffuse opening movement, *Sehr getragen*, begins with a short, slow introduction in a diffident vein. The restless main theme sounds like something from Hugo Wolf's *Italian Serenade*. One also can hear strains of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. The music, with its constant striving, turmoil and many exciting dramatic climaxes, always sounds like it is going somewhere but, a la Bruckner, takes a very long time to arrive, but unlike Bruckner, one is left feeling uncertain whether it was a worth the time. The second movement, *Ruhig fließend*, begins peacefully and is not without suspense, but it would have benefited by several judicious cuts. *Rasch und heiter*, a scherzo, is the only movement that is of normal length. The energetic thematic material sounds rather like a cross between Richard Strauss and Hugo Wolf. However, it is the enchanted and mysterious trio, with its excellent and effective use of pizzicato, that makes the greatest impression. The very powerful, dramatic and engaging finale, *Bewegt und mit Leidenschaft*, has many fine qualities but it, too, perhaps is overly long. When I first played this work, I was not convinced this quartet could be called worth-while, but subsequent hearings have led me to conclude it is a good, though certainly not a great, work. While it is not imitative of any of the other composers mentioned, its eclecticism robs it of an original sound. I would not recommend it for concert, but it can be recommended to experienced amateur players.



Leander Schlegel (1844-1913) was born in the Dutch town Oegstgeest near Leiden where he began his music studies. He showed an early talent, especially on the violin and drew the interest of the virtuoso Ferdinand Laub. Eventually, however, he concentrated on piano and composition and continued his studies at the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied piano with Ignaz Moscheles and composition with Ernst Richter. For several years thereafter, he pursued a career as a solo pianist before settling in Haarlem where he taught and then served as director of the music school there for the rest of his life. He wrote two string quartets toward the end of his life, however, I am only familiar with the first.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.17 appeared in 1905. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato e sostenuto*, is quite lively with memorable melodies. The second movement, *Munter und etwas gemässig*, is bright and good natured. *Langsam und sehr ausdrucksvoll*, is rather like a song without words and has a

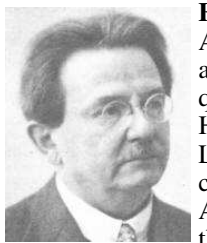
rather compelling main theme. The finale, *Ruhig bewegt*, also has effective melodies and uses frequent time changes to create interest. This is a solid work which can be recommended to amateurs.



Hans Kaspar Schmid (1874-1953) was born in the German town of Landau. He studied composition at the Munich Conservatory with Ludwig Thuille. He pursued a career as a teacher and composer. He wrote one string quartet.

String Quartet in G Major, Op.26 dates from 1920. The style is post late Romantic.

The first movement, *Ruhig fließend*, alternates between two contrasting subjects, the first is idyllic, the second more energetic. The second movement is a scherzo, *Rasch* with a contrasting trio which sound rather like an updated version of a musette. A melancholy *Andante cantabile* comes third, and the work finishes with a very effective *Molto appassionato*. Good for concert and good amateur players.



Franz Schmidt (1874-1939) was born in the Austrian city of Pressburg (now Bratislava) and began his musical training there. Subsequently, in Vienna, he studied cello with Franz Hellmesberger and piano with Theodor Leschetizky. At the Vienna Conservatory, his composition teachers were Robert Fuchs and Anton Bruckner. Schmidt served as a cellist in the Vienna Court Opera Orchestra (1896-1911)

and played under Mahler. From the First World War until his retirement, he held many important teaching posts, eventually serving as the director of the Vienna Staatsakademie as well as Hochschule für Musik. Schmidt's roots are to be found in the Viennese Romanticism of his master Bruckner. Although not a prolific composer, he is nonetheless considered the last of the great romantic symphonists. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major dates from 1925. From a tonal standpoint, one might say that it begins where Bruckner's marvelous string quintet leaves off. Though clearly rooted in traditional tonality, it nonetheless pushes these boundaries ever farther. The opening movement, *Anmutig bewegt*, (graceful, but with movement) almost sounds as if it begins in mid phrase. The main theme only takes shape slowly and over a very broad tonal canvas as Schmidt gradually fleshes it out by way of development. The stunning second movement, *Adagio*, is clearly the center of gravity of the quartet. The haunting main theme is first given out by the cello before it is taken up by the violins. It is calm and with broad vistas and requires great space to make its affect. Schmidt builds in small increments quite leisurely. In the powerful middle section, the viola forcefully declaims the dramatic second theme. Then against the hypnotic pizzicato in the lower voices, the violins embark upon an extraordinarily beautiful duet. Next comes a scherzo, *Sehr lebhaft*. (very lively) It starts in a very Brucknerian vein but the middle section, which resembles an elves dance because of its harmonics and high pitched running notes, sounds more like a post-Brucknerian Mendelssohn. The finale, *Ruhig fließend*, (quiet but flowing) is a theme and set of several very original variations. This quartet is a masterwork that belongs in the concert hall, and because it presents no insurmountable technical difficulties, recommended for amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in G Major came in 1929. It was dedicated to Arnold Rosé, concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic and leader of the famous string quartet bearing his name. The first movement, *Molto tranquillo*, is characterized by its chromaticism, remaining tonal, harmonically one hears echoes of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. The calm, soft melodies are accompanied by great independence of the individual voices, created by unstable harmonies and insistent rhythms. Next comes a powerful

Adagio which brings forth a sense of yearning. Later there is a rustic theme in the lower voices which sounds rather like a funeral march. The third movement is a lopsided Scherzo with two trios. The cello part stands out by virtue of its highly unusual rhythm. The finale, *Allegro*, starts off in a kind of genial neo-baroque manner, almost recalling part of the Scherzo. But underneath, a sense of unease persists. Though only four years separate the two quartets, this one is far more modern sounding, though still tonal. Not immediately as appealing his first quartet. Still good enough for concert and amateurs.



Othmar Schoeck (1886-1957) was born in the Swiss town of Brunnen. He studied briefly at the Leipzig Conservatory with Max Reger but finished studies in Zurich at the Conservatory there. Known mainly for his art songs and song cycles, he also wrote operas and instrumental compositions, including two string quartets. After World War I, Schoeck found himself drawn toward the

music of Les Six in Paris, as well as the serialist composers of the New Vienna School, in particular the music of Alban Berg.

None of this, however, can be heard in his **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.23** which dates from 1913. It is an interesting work in that it anticipates the musical style of neo-classicism which appeared a decade later. The lovely main theme to the opening *Allegro* has a Mozartean quality to it, albeit of the sort an early 20th century Mozart might have written. Sunny and with few clouds, the music drifts along effortlessly. The second movement, *Allegretto*, Schoeck calls an intermezzo but it is more or a scherzo although many different moods are expressed in a very short time. Mostly playful, and again, in an updated Mozartian way. The substantial finale, *Allegro risoluto*, begins with a lengthy, playful teasing introductory section. After nearly a minute, the lyrical main theme at last makes its appearance. It is a very fine example of Schoeck's brand of updated classicism. The music is highly interesting taking many unexpected rhythmic and tonal turns and in so doing is both highly original and quite interesting. This is a very good work deserving of concert performance and which can be warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major, Op.37 was composed in 1923. It is in five movements. Although ten years passed since he wrote his first, tonally it is not much more advanced, although it features some very brief moments of dissonance, they are very brief. Overall, the music is songful, yearning, and post Brahmsian romantic. In the first movement, In the opening movement, *Grave non troppo lento*, there are dance-like inspirations which momentarily suggest Viennese waltzes and simpler country dances amongst the general romantic melodies. There is very little which conjures grave in this pretty jolly music. The second movement, *Allegretto tranquillo*, has a ghost like accompaniment over which a long, eerie melody in the first violin is heard. The third pizzicato movement sounds like a very slightly less genial version of the Ravel quartet. The *Lento* which comes next is a tender high pitched lament. The finale, *Presto*, bustles along with much forward energy. This is another very good quartet, certainly strong enough for concert performance where it is sure to make a strong impression. It can be managed by technically adept amateurs.



Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) was born in Vienna. As a youth he studied cello and violin. His father's death, when he was a teenager, forced him to get a job as a bank clerk. He studied counterpoint and composition privately with the composer Alexander Zemlinsky but was largely self-taught. He is, of course, famous as one of the founders of the Second Vienna School, and of twelve tone music and atonalism as it is sometimes called. But he was

not always atonal, at least not at the beginning of his career. He wrote five complete string quartets.

His **String Quartet in D Major** was composed in 1897. It was given no opus and was not published during Schoenberg's lifetime. People who are only familiar with his later works will be quite surprised to find how tuneful and appealing this early work is. The opening Allegro molto, has tinges of Dvorak both melodically and rhythmically. It well written and captivating. Second is a short Intermezzo, andante grazioso, played muted. The chirping in the high register of the first violin gives music, with its very lyrical melody a strange effect. Third is an Andante con moto, which starts off with a dolorous melody in the cello. It has a kind of hand dog mood. Though not so marked it is a kind of theme and variations. Very interesting and well done. The finale, Allegro, opens with a series of unison chords which lead to a very Dvorak-like main melody. It is another fine movement. Not to be missed by amateurs and for concert because of the surprise it is certain to create among an audience.

String Quartet in d minor, Op.7 dates from 1905. This massive work bears no resemblance whatsoever to his earlier work. It is in one large movement with four sections, It is not an easy work to describe. For example, he inserts a scherzo and an adagio -during the development portion. Later on one can hear the start of his atonal efforts, and though densely chromatic, the music is not always particularly dissonant. The Quartet opens with an ambitious theme striving forward to some far-distance triumph. After a substantial working-out of this idea and its accompanying subsidiary motives, a somewhat more relaxed second idea arrives, piano, in a duet between the first and second violins. Thiev-ery lengthy development strains both listeners and players alike. Until finally the scherzo portion of the work arrives. This is followed by an adagio sub-movement which recalls Verklärte Nacht. Spooky ponticello tremolos make a transition back to the main body of the movement and, with it, the original theme. The remainder of the Quartet, tonally, is more approachable, and essentially more understandable, style. The broad coda is of a warmth that bears the influence of Richard Strauss's rather rich tonal writings. For concert this is an interesting work but it is beyond amateurs unless they are of professional standard and feel quite at home with Late Beethoven and beyond. The remainder of his quartets are beyond the remit of this Guide.



Bernhard Scholz (1835-1916) was born in the German city of Mainz. He studied piano with Ernst Pauer and counterpoint and composition with Siegfried Dehn. A friend of Brahms, Joseph Joachim and Clara Schumann, he pursued a career as a teacher and director of several prominent conservatories. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet in G Major, Op.46 dates from 1876. It won the Florentine Quartet Prize of 1877. The judges were Brahms and Robert Volkmann. How one may well ask was it that these two prominent and successful composers awarded this quartet the prize? One must wonder what was the competition like and did Brahms' friendship with Scholz play any role in the awarding of the prize. Did the judges know which works were by which composer? Sadly, this is another case of a prize winning work which is barely mediocre. From an academic standpoint, the writing is quite correct as to sonata form etc. However, this cannot hide the very serious defects of this work. The themes of the first movement, Allegro, are dry and forgettable. There is no spontaneity in them. The second movement, Maestoso ma non lento, is a set of variations on a funeral march-like theme. The theme has a rather pompous quality and variations are not particularly interesting. Third is a Tempo de Menuetto, the theme is not better than ordinary and the whole effect is pretty dry. The finale, Allegro con brio, has lots of bustle to it. It starts off well enough but hard driving rhythms cannot

hide the threadbare melodic material and after a while it becomes tiresome. I would give this quartet a miss.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.48 was completed in 1879. The opening Allegro is agitated. The Presto scherzando which follows has a playful, teasing quality with a nicely contrasting middle section. It is an effective movement. Third is an nice Adagio with an agitated middle section. The finale, Allegro con spirito has two appealing subjects. All in all this is a better work than No.1 and can be recommended to amateurs.



Leo Schratzenholz (1872-1955) was born in London the son of a concert pianist. He studied cello and composition at the Berlin Academy of Music, the latter with Max Bruch. His career was as a teacher, composer and performer. He wrote one string quartet.

His **String Quartet in b minor, Op.28** appeared in 1902. As a close friend of the violinist Joseph Joachim, whose quartet premiered the work, perhaps it is not surprising that the influence of Brahms is prominent. The elegaic opening movement, Moderato e sostenuto, certainly has a strong Brahmsian flavor. It has a strong emotional mood to it, is very nicely written and plays well. The second movement is a scherzo, Allegretto con moto. Not at all easy to play. Third is a warm Andante con espressivo. The finale, Allegro con brio, begins with a short slow introduction. The main part of the movement is full of stormy episodes that are quite effective and exciting but not necessarily easy to play. This quartet is good enough for concert and can be managed by amateurs of high technical standards.



It's generally acknowledged that **Franz Schubert** wrote 15 formal string quartets, this is if you consider the one movement Quartettsatz in c minor D.703 as counting for one quartet. Otto Deutsch, Schubert's cataloger, put the number at "about 20" but three are lost and two appear to be nearly identical to D.87 (No.10) Of these extant 15 quartets, few chamber music lovers have either heard in concert

or themselves played more than four. These four famous works are the above-mentioned Quartettsatz, which generally goes by the designation of Quartet No.12, Quartet No.13 in a minor D.804, Quartet No.14 in d minor D.810, Death & the Maiden, and Quartet No.15 in G Major D.887, sometimes called the Titanic because of its great length. So, first off, let me say that if you have not played these works, they should be among the first of Schubert's you play. I will not comment on them as they are quite famous and much has been written about them and there is nothing I can add which has not already been written. These four quartets can be found in C.F. Peters two volume set which they have titled "The Complete Edition", which however are not complete but which is the easiest to obtain.

This so-called "complete" edition only contains his last nine string quartets, Nos.7-15. That this is so is almost certainly due to the fact that Peters was unable to obtain the rights to Schubert's first six quartets. How this came about is as follows: In 1870, Peters obtained the original rights to Quartet Nos.7-8 and published them in 1871. But Nos.9-15 were originally published by the firms of Jos. Czerny, B. Senff, C.A. Spina and A. Diabelli, each of which for various reasons eventually sold its rights to Peters, who was then able to bring out its "complete" edition toward the end of the 19th century.

As for the first six quartets, they remained on publishers shelves slowly disintegrating and were only published for the first time, and in book form, as part of the Gesamtausgabe or Collected Edition in 1890. Shortly thereafter, Breitkopf and Härtel and Doblinger obtained the rights to these works and made the parts available

The background to the Early Quartets and why most chamber music players have neither heard nor played them is quite interesting. In 1808, Schubert's father, himself a keen amateur chamber music player, enrolled the eleven year old boy, who already knew how to play the violin, piano, and organ, in the K.u.K. (Royal & Imperial) Stadtkonvikt where he could receive a musical as well as general-education at the state's expense. Actually, Schubert won a competition for one of two open spots which made his enrollment possible. That the education on offer was good was beyond question, but the Habsburgs were not wasting much money on the living conditions within the school. Schubert referred to the bleak and uninviting institution where he spent five years as "the prison." He was often forced to send begging letters to his older brother Ferdinand asking for a few kreutzers to buy the occasional roll or apple to bridge the long gap between his mediocre lunch and his paltry supper. But the musical training Schubert received at the Konvikt was thorough and gave him the necessary tools to begin a compositional career. Even more important, as far as chamber music went, the many hours he spent in the family string quartet and piano trio left him in no doubt as to what each instrument could do and gave him a far better grasp than many if not most of his contemporaries as to what sounded well and worked and what did not.

During holidays and summer vacation, Schubert usually returned home and had the opportunity to immediately hear and play his newly created quartets. His older brothers Ignaz and Ferdinand took the violin parts, he manned the viola and his father played the cello, it is often said poorly. Critics, who clearly have not taken the trouble to examine the early quartets, erroneously noted that the "particularly weak" and or "unimaginative" cello parts found in these early works must have been due his father's lack of ability on the cello. If this is so, it took Schubert a rather long time to discover his father's meager talent because there is nothing particularly "weak" or "unimaginative" about the cello parts to his first five quartets as well as some of the others which followed. While these parts do not rise to the level of excellence or difficulty found in the last four masterpieces, where the cello often leads as much as the first violin, still, the cello parts to most of the early quartets are on a par with those of late Haydn or of Mozart's Haydn Quartets and even some of the Beethoven's early quartets. As J.A. Westrup noted in his study on Schubert, "In contrast to certain of his more Olympian colleagues, Schubert doubtless conceived his quartets not so much as a personal testament but rather as things to be played. Any approach to the evolving Schubertian style must proceed from this assumption."

Schubert's early quartets have been summarily dismissed, in most instances without any kind of proper examination. Few would argue that Beethoven's Op.18 Quartets reach the level of his Late Quartets or that Haydn's Op.33 (let alone his Op.17 which we still often hear in concert) match those of his Opp.76 or 77, but the early efforts of these composers have neither been dismissed nor consigned to oblivion. What happened in Schubert's case? First, it must be noted that Schubert was unable, with the exception of No.13, to get any of his quartets published in his lifetime. He had incredible difficulty even getting them performed in public. There is only one known instance where a quartet was performed at a public concert in Vienna while Schubert was still alive, and this not that long before he died. It's worth remembering that the greatest string quartet player of the day, Ignaz Schuppanzigh, told Schubert, after playing through Death & the Maiden, "Brother, this is nothing! Forget it and leave well enough alone. Stick to your Lieder." (So much for Schuppanzigh much-touted taste, although it must be admitted that he did not trash No.13, which Schubert dedicated to him. And it was in no small part due to Schuppanzigh's efforts that Beethoven's early quartets became known in Vienna)

Hence we have a situation where all but one of the composer's string quartets languished, unpublished until after his death. And,

keep in mind that there is a huge and startling difference between Schubert's last quartets and his early ones, just as in the case of Beethoven. However, where a composer's works are all discovered at once, and this after his death, it is far more frequent that the early works are dismissed and ignored. Had Schubert's early works received publication and performance during his lifetime, this almost certainly would not have happened.

Lastly it is the critics most if not all who have done their part to make sure that Schubert's early quartets would be consigned to oblivion by dismissing them as juvenile experiments full of aimless harmonic wandering. But as Homer Ulrich, one of the most respected critics of modern times, has written, Schubert was not attempting to imitate "Classical Form" and his so-called errors of form amount to nothing in view of the fact that his efforts were aimed at discovering a new tonal texture and lyricism. The variety and even the extravagance of his modulations "served to develop in Schubert a surety of touch and the harmonic imagination that are such large factors in his later style." In short, Schubert's early quartets show the path that had to be traveled from Classicism to Romanticism. But no matter how respected a critic may argue for a work, in the end, it is the music itself which must convince. And Schubert's early string quartets do convince those listeners and players who take the trouble to get acquainted with them. Some of his most lovely melodies are to be found in these works and one can clearly hear that the foundation upon which he built his masterpieces lies in this early body of work.

String Quartet No.1 in B flat Major, D.18 was composed sometime during 1812 by which time he had been exposed to the music of most of the major composers: Haydn, Mozart and Rossini, Beethoven excepted because his music was considered too radical and taboo by his conservative music masters. But this quartet sounds nothing like the favorites of his teachers, those composers listed above. Instead, it begins in a completely original and unusual fashion with a slow, mysterious and substantial introduction. The main theme is moodily presented in its entirety. The atmosphere seems threatening as the dramatic tension slowly rises to a powerful thundering chordal climax. Although there is no explicit direction to play on *attacca* into the following *Presto vivace*, the final chord of the introduction is clearly indicative of this intent. The *Presto* is quite an exciting and stormy affair. The main theme, Vivaldi-like, is played over a continuous background of pulsing 8th and 16th notes and 16th, the effect created approaches the sound of a tremolo. Already, we can hear various touches which will be used to great effect in his later works. Most extraordinary of all is that the music really sounds nothing like Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven. Any of his teachers would have been impressed by this movement. Virtually all of them were stunned by his impressive talent and ability. If Michael Holzer, one of Schubert's most important teachers could write that "...the lad had harmony in his little finger," then the second movement, *Menuetto*, is proof that he had melody in his very being. The main theme of the minuet is like an Austrian *Ländler* but more probably it comes direct from Schubert's inexhaustible store of divine melody. The third movement, marked *Andante*, has more of the sound of a of a stately, slow *rococo* French minuet rather than an Austrian one. The finale, *Presto* is exciting, having the orchestral sound of an Italian overture. The material is distributed fairly evenly between the parts, and the cello, besides being given a lot to do in this movement, even introduces the third theme, a fugue. Good enough for concert, and also amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major, D.32 was composed in September 1812 while Schubert was at home on summer vacation. After Schubert's death, the loose-leaf sheets upon which it had been written came into the possession of his brother Ferdinand. Two years later, Ferdinand sold them, along with much else, to the music publisher Anton Diabelli. Neither Diabelli nor his successors (Spina, Schreiber and Cranz) ever chose to publish the work. By the time the *Gesamtausgabe* editors began work

(1890), one of the four completed movements as well as part of a second had been lost. The editors therefore only chose to publish the completed movements. (There had also been a partially completed fifth movement, apparently Schubert's first thought for a slow movement) The missing pages eventually did turn up in the collection of a German diplomat and the complete quartet was eventually brought out in the 1950's. In the first movement, Presto, the compositional technique resembles that used by Haydn, i.e. the taking of a fragment and developing it into a theme. The fragment is a mere dotted half note followed by a triplet. After several unisono passages, which serve a longish introduction, some but not all of the theme is finally given out. As the movement progresses in this fashion, the triplets take on a life of their own, as in his Great C Major Symphony, and become part of the theme. Though it seems to be impending at points, a second theme is never introduced. The second movement, Andante, is one of the two which were originally lost. The sad and pleading main theme given to the first violin, has that vocal quality and divine spark which only Schubert could produce. A simple yet extraordinarily powerful movement. Next comes a Minuetto Allegro. It is a straight forward and simple minuet, but the layered tonal texture of the part-writing creates a chamber orchestra sound. In the trio section, we are presented with a lovely Ländler. The finale, Allegro con spirito, is as long as the other movements put together and uses the same kernel or fragment technique found in the first movement. From the opening two measures comes part of the lovely second theme while the running eighth notes provide the first theme. This movement is another reproof to those critics who mistakenly claimed the cello parts to Schubert's early quartets are inordinately easy. While there is nothing here in thumb position, there are long and important 8th note passages, full of accidentals, of the kind one finds in Haydn's Op.74 and 76 quartets. The cello also participates, as an echo, in the presentation of the beautiful second theme. Of course, it is not just the cello which is given a fair share of the thematic material, the viola and second violin are in no way treated as poor sisters. Though still relatively simple, this quartet does show an advance in technique, especially in the final movement. Again we find things which are entirely characteristic of Schubert—such as the use of massed 16th notes and of highly vocal melody—which he was to continue to use and develop in his later works. Also a candidate for concert and home.

String Quartet No.3 in B flat Major, D.36 was completed in the last part of February 1813. He had successfully finished his course of instruction under Wenzel Ruzicka the previous term and was passed on to Imperial Court Kapellmeister Antonio Salieri, the teacher of the most advanced students. Ruzicka noted in his final evaluation of Schubert, "He has learned it from God." Salieri, who taught Schubert harmony, counterpoint and Italian vocal composition, was no less impressed. His end of term reports included such remarks as "A remarkable musical talent." and "...an exceptional talent for music." Though by today's tastes, Salieri's compositions seem dry and anemic, no one can accuse him of being unable to recognize talent. So jealous was he of Mozart that he was forced to make a sworn public statement that he had had no hand in poisoning him. Beethoven, with whom Salieri was quite impressed, studied with the Italian off and on for nearly 10 years. As for Schubert, Salieri became a mentor. Beyond his role of teacher, he interested himself in all of the young man's early compositions, not just those written for class. Several of Schubert's manuscripts from this time are copiously annotated by Salieri, String Quartet No.3 is among them. The opening movement is an Allegro in B flat Major. The interplay between the fetching main theme in the violins and the harmony of running 8th notes in the cello and later the viola too is quite interesting. It starts as counterpoint but eventually morphs into the second theme. If this were not enough, two brilliant contrapuntal fugal episodes grace this by turns charming, dramatic and

very original sounding movement. The part-writing, in particular the treatment of the lower voices, is excellent and, from the standpoint of equality, exceeds virtually all of Haydn's quartets, with the possible exception of Op.20 No.2, and matches Beethoven's Op.18. The second movement, Andante, begins with a fine melody which is introduced by the cello and then taken over by the violin. But far more striking is a lengthy chromatic episode which appears dramatically in the cello's lower registers. It ends in a sudden tremolo, an effect Schubert would use time and again, most notably in his last quartet, with great success. The third movement, Menuetto, Allegro non troppo, is an "echt Wiener Minuet"—a real Viennese Minuet in sound and feel. That this is so is really quite extraordinary since the thematic material is quite slight and extremely simple. The treatment shows a considerable advance over his First Quartet. The thematic material of the trio is perhaps even slighter than the Minuet, yet again Schubert makes it into something quite effective. Perhaps some of this may be attributed to his lessons with Salieri. The finale, Allegretto, begins with a genial theme Schubert develops exploring many different possibilities. There is also a lovely second theme which makes two rather brief appearances but is not developed. The part-writing is good and the use of 32nd notes, just short of creating a pure tremolo, make their appearance at the dramatic heights on two occasions. For the first time, the lead violin is taken into its highest registers while the second plays octaves below with telling effect. An effective choice for concert or home.

There is no place better to hear the kind of experiments which Schubert was making than in the opening bars to **String Quartet No.4, in C Major, D.46**. Schubert, for the second time in four quartets, begins with an Adagio—not an entire movement, but an introduction, which in and of itself, is both original and important. In 1813, there were virtually no precedents for beginning a quartet in this fashion, certainly not amongst the better known Viennese classicists, of which Schubert could have been aware with one exception—Mozart's K.465 'Dissonant' Quartet. There are a number of parallels, but also an important difference. Both quartets are in the key of C Major. The Adagio introductions to both works are introspective, even brooding in mood. One has the sense that something ominous is impending—especially in the Schubert where the bold use of chromaticism is quite striking. But this is as far as the similarity goes. In the Dissonant, there is suddenly sunshine, unexpected for sure, and no more of the gloomy introduction. But in the Schubert, the Allegro which follows is indeed a stormy one. In addition, unlike Mozart, Schubert uses the theme of the introduction as part of the musical structure to the main movement. There is a lovely second theme which appears two times but only briefly. One is reminded of the last movement to the his third quartet, which was completed only one month before this work. The opening to the second movement, Andante con moto, begins in typical early Schubertian fashion with the first violin stating a simple pastoral melody to a pulsing accompaniment in the other voices, however, in the middle section, which at first appears to be a development of the main theme, he not only gives each voice part of the harmonic underpinning, but also uses the viola and its special timbre to achieve a mellow result. Sonata form is discarded and the main theme simply morphs into a march. Further, the main theme is never formally restated but appears only at the very end of the movement after an almost imperceptible transformation of the second theme. In the following Menuetto, Schubert begins with an ordinary and somewhat bombastic minuet but in the middle section, he creates a beautiful and rather haunting dance. This is done by dramatically reducing the dynamics to a mere hush while minutely shifting the harmony measure by measure. The trio provides an excellent contrast with the minuet. After a two measure trumpet fanfare in the lower three voices the first violin gives forth with what is a typically charming Austrian ländler. What is unusual about this trio is that Schubert uses the little trumpet fanfare, inte-

grates it into the first theme, and creates and hybrid second theme. Immediately after the double bar, the first violin gives forth with the trumpet call but then adds a lovely bird-like refrain which is clearly related to the first theme of the trio. This is the identical technique which Schubert employed in the first movement and one senses Schubert's intentional experimentation with form rather than some lack of familiarity with the classical rules of strict sonata form. The buoyant main theme of the finale, Allegro, and the supporting accompaniment create considerable excitement. An excellent choice for concert and amateurs.

Schubert began work on **String Quartet No.5 in B Flat Major, D.68** in mid June of that year. He worked on it for about a week and then put it aside. During the middle of that August, he took it up again and completed it. Like all of the first six quartets, it was not published until 1890. By this time, the two middle movements of the manuscript had either disappeared or disintegrated on printers shelves. They have never been found. The opening movement, a massive Allegro, is extraordinary from several standpoints. First, is its very size—at least twice as long as any other of his previous first movements. Schubert did not choose to write on this scale again until Quartet No.13. Next is the orchestral quality of the music. Schubert's use of pairs created a density of tonal sound which was without parallel and which often created a sound more like a small string orchestra than a quartet. The movement opens with all four voices playing a loud triple-stop half note. The rest of the phrase continues on in unison with a loud retort followed by a soft answer. After repeating this sequence, it is slightly altered and repeated again until the first violin finally begins the somewhat operatic main theme over the pulsing accompaniment in the other voices. It can be seen that this theme derived is in part from the unison introduction. The use of triplets in this movement is especially prominent and it is the way in which they are used that, perhaps more than any other feature, establishes the lineage between this work and his Symphony No.9, the Great C Major to which this work must be considered an antecedent. There are long stretches during this movement where the orchestral sound is created by the use of paired triplets. The overall sound is further enhanced because the second violin is belting out double stopped triplets. The effect is both unusual and quite striking. The finale, an Allegro, is also written on a larger scale than what he had heretofore composed. The catchy opening theme, at first blush, does not appear able to withstand extensive development, but Schubert surprises with a wealth of ideas. Although this quartet is incomplete, it is too good to ignore. Amateurs will enjoy it and it could be brought into the concert hall where a short work is required.

Immediately after completing the Fifth Quartet, Schubert began work on another which he completed toward the end of September of 1813. On the title page to **String Quartet No.6 in D Major, D.74**, which was rediscovered in 1928, the following dedication in Schubert's hand was written: "Trois Quatuors pour deux Violons, Viole et Violoncelle composés par François Schubert écolier de Msr. De Salieri." Although Schubert left the Stadt Konvikt in June of 1813, he continued lessons on a private basis with Salieri until 1817. We also know that this is one of the works which Salieri must have examined because after his name on the title page, Salieri added, in his own handwriting, the words "premier Maître de chapelle de la cour imp et Royale de Vienne." Was this then the first of a set of three, the last two of which are lost? Otto Deutsch, Schubert's cataloguer thinks so. But the English Schubert scholar Maurice Brown believes that Quartet Nos. 8 and 10 (D.112 & D.87) are the last two. The opening Allegro ma non troppo, is written on a huge scale but and clothed with some very charming themes. The second subject is just as lovely as the first. There are several episodes where Schubert achieves the kind of orchestral tonal effect he obtained in the Fifth Quartet. The following Andante is both poignant and somewhat introspective. The Minuetto, Allegro is extraordinarily fine. It might serve as

the perfect example of a tasteful classical Viennese minuet. The main theme, though restrained, is quite lyrical because of the chromaticism. The lovely trio is a fetching country ländler. The delicate melody has a sweet reticence about it, rather like a young girl being introduced at her first dance. It is not very far to go from music like this to the early efforts of Lanner and the elder Strauss. The finale, an energetic Allegro, brings the quartet to a satisfactory conclusion. Again good for concert or home.

Though few are aware of it, there is a second much earlier Quartetsatz, one which does not appear in the Peters edition. The **Quartetsatz in c minor, D.103** was composed by Franz Schubert in 1814, not long after he finished Quartet No.3. It is believed to be the only surviving movement of a complete quartet in c minor. The movement is one of several quartets sold to the Vienna music publisher Anton Diabelli by Ferdinand Schubert following his brother's death in 1828. It came into the possession of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde of Vienna during the latter half of the 19th century and there it languished until a performance edition was prepared by Professor Alfred Orel, a noted musicologist in 1939. It of a single movement and begins with an introduction marked Grave and is followed by the main section, a stormy Allegro. An effective work, but difficult to play up to the tempo that makes it so.



Erwin Schulhoff (1894-1942) was born in Prague. Anton Dvorak heard him play the piano when Schulhoff was five and encouraged his parents to send him to the Prague Conservatory. At age 12 his family moved to Vienna and subsequently he studied in Vienna, Leipzig and Cologne and among his many teachers were Max Reger and Claude Debussy. Injured during the First World War, he pursued a career as a composer and teacher. He died in a Nazi concentration camp. He wrote three complete string quartet and several other pieces for the genre.

One of these was his **Divertimento for String Quartet, Op.14** which was completed in 1914. This is his only traditionally tonal work for quartet. It is in five movements. It opens Lebhaft and is quite lively, upbeat, can do sounding almost like something American composers might have written two decades later. Second is a Cavatine, played muted. It is languid and slightly melancholy. Third is an Intermezzo in which the viola plays a declamatory theme over a pizzicato in the other voices followed by a slower and more lyrical section. Fourth is a Romanze which sounds rather like the beginning of the preceding Intermezzo. The finale, Rondo, has much the same spirit as the opening movement, upbeat and lively. This is an effective work, interesting and worthy of an occasional concert performance.

His **String Quartet No.1** dates from 1924. Schulhoff's 1924 String Quartet No. 1 came in between the periods of his experimentation with atonality and other progressive methods between 1919-1923. The work is cast in four movements, with a Presto con fuoco opening full of vigor and rhythmic energy. Its music is at once catchy in its jaunty, folk-like character. The ensuing Allegretto con moto e con malinconia grotesca deftly and humorously lives up to its marking with a grotesque sort of melancholy. The third movement, marked Allegro giocoso alla Slavacca, again turns folk like and also features some engaging effects, making the violin sound almost like a piccolo. The Andante molto sostenuto finale, the first truly slow movement, is charming but gloomy with an ethereal sound world. A very appealing and good work for concert but beyond the abilities of all but the very best amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 was completed in 1925. The Second String Quartet appeared in 1925. The first movement, Allegro agitato is a compact with a energetic main theme and animato coda. The second movement, Tema con variazione, moderato, is

a sequence of variations on the eloquent theme announced on unaccompanied viola at the outset. The first variation brings the remaining three instruments musingly into play, while the second is quite somber. The third variation breaks out into an excited dance over a loping pizzicato accompaniment, before the fourth restores a measure of calm. The viola returns to round off proceedings with a tranquil recollection of the initial theme. The third movement, *Allegro gajo*, is another of the composer's takes on folk music, mostly quite vigorous but at the end dying away quietly. The finale, *Andante, allegro molto*, commences with an elegiac introduction leading to bracing rhythmic affair. Also a good work, perhaps not quite as appealing as No.1. Still strong enough for concert, but not for amateurs.

Five Pieces for String Quartet dates from 1924 and was dedicated to Darius Milhaud. It is a suite of five short musical pieces. The work contains stylistic connections to both a baroque dance suite and to other pieces composed by the Second Viennese School. The five pieces are Viennese Waltz, Serenade, Czech folk music, Tango and Tarantella. Not exactly atonal, but certainly not tonal either. Neither hide nor hare, so to speak. Not great, but in parts interesting. This work will not appeal to audiences as much as his two complete string quartets discussed above.

Robert Schumann is, of course, one of the most famous composers of the 19th century. His three string quartets, Op.41 get performed in concert with some regularity and much has been written about them. As such, I have nothing further to add other than to mention that if you are unfamiliar with these works, you should by all means play them.



William Schuman (1910-1992) was born in New York City. He studied composition with Roy Harris both privately and at Columbia College. He wrote five string quartets. The first quartet which was completed in 1935 was withdrawn by him. His style is not easy to describe. It is not traditionally tonal, it is not atonal, it is to some extent polytonal. During his lifetime, his music was highly praised and received awards and critical acclaim, but I can only think of the Hans Christian Andersen fairytale, the Emperor's New Clothes.

String Quartet No.2 dates from 1937. It is in three movements. The first is entitled *Sinfonia* and has a searching and mysterious mood. It is very difficult to determine what is happening. The second movement, *Passacaglia*, is dark and morose. The finale, *Fugue*, is the most interesting and cohesive. I do not see this quartet as being programmed in concert nor of much interest, except for the finale, to amateur players.

String Quartet No.3 came in 1939. The first movement, Introduction and fugue, starts quietly with only the viola playing. The violins enter but it does not create any expectation that anything is going to happen for some time. For what it is, this introduction is overly long. I can imagine people fidgeting in their seats perhaps in ennui, when the devil is the fugue going to finally begin. When it does, it is a disappointment. Not exactly exciting or even interesting. The second movement, *Intermezzo*, is considerably better. It does at least have intermezzo like qualities with a theme which can be followed for a while, however, the second part rather destroys what has come before. The finale, *Rondo* and variations wanders all about. One is left with feeling that the composer has nothing much to say and is trying to be modern or something but there is a terrible sameness to each movement and the music within it.

Nearly fifty years later in 1987 came his final work in this genre, **String Quartet No.5**. It is in two movements. The opening movement, Introduction, combines an outer space-like eeriness with a forlorn mood which one might imagine upon looking upon a battlefield after the battle finished, the dead lying every-

where, nothing movement. Hardly a pleasant experience. The concluding movement, *Variations, epilogue*, is surprisingly, tonal, traditionally tonal. It is sad, sounding like a cross between a folk tune and a church hymn. A playful and more dissonant variation follows and from there it is downhill. I do not think the expression *Ars longa, vita brevis* applies to these quartets or possibly to Schuman himself. I just cannot see myself every playing these again or going to a concert to hear them after having done it once. But, different strokes for different folks and as the saying goes, there is someone for everyone. So maybe...



Joseph Schuster (1748-1812) was born in Dresden, capital of the Kingdom of Saxony. After studying with local teachers, he moved to Venice where he completed his studies with G.B. Martini (Padre Martini) and Girolamo Pera. He was primarily known for his operas. It is now known that he also composed at least six string quartets. For many years, four of these, including the **String**

Quartet in A Major were mistakenly attributed to Mozart based on the opinion of experts who examined unsigned manuscripts. It was not until 1932, that they were published as Mozart's Mailander or Milanese String Quartets. But in the 1960's the autograph manuscript to one of the so-called Milanese quartets was discovered in Padua, removing all doubt that this was a quartet by Schuster. Further research has uncovered references to the other three quartets clearly establishing that Schuster was the composer. The **String Quartet in B flat Major, K.Anh.210, String Quartet in C Major, K.Anh.211, String Quartet in A Major, K.Anh.212 and String Quartet in E flat Major, K.Anh.213** all formerly known as Milanese String Quartets do bear a considerable resemblance to early Mozart works from this period. They all are in three movements, except the A Major which is in two. It is not hard to see how experts mistook this work for that of Mozart, who spent considerable time in Italy during this period, including writing works for the same patrons in Padua. These works are no less interesting now that we know they are by Schuster than when we thought they were by Mozart and are historically important. They can be recommended to amateurs of modest abilities.



Antonio Scontrino (1850-1922) was born in the Italian town of Trapani. He studied the bass and composition at the Palermo Conservatory in Sicily and taught there and also at the Conservatory of Florence. He wrote five string quartets. Why the editor of Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music allowed the author of the article on Scontrino 11 pages to discuss his string quartets, the same amount allotted to those of Franz Schubert, while at the same time the quartets of Carl Nielsen barely gets half a page is a mystery to me.

String Quartet No.1 in g minor dates from 1901. It is overly long, lacking in convincing or memorable thematic material, unnecessarily rhythmically complicated, this is especially true in the opening movement, *Allegro appassionato* and the *Scherzo grazioso* which follows it. The themes are dry and sound almost contrived. In the middle section of the scherzo there is a fugue. The finale, *Allegro vivo*, does have an appealing main subject but the way he deals spoils its overall effect. Not for concert or home.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major came out in 1905. This, too, is a long-winded affair and not at all easy to play. The opening theme to the first movement, *Allegro giusto*, bears a certain external resemblance to wakeup call one hears in Dvorak's Op.96 American Quartet. It nicely handled and worked out. A good movement. Next comes a scherzo, *Il piu presto possibile, finche lo permette la chiarezza*—as fast as possible as long as it allows for clarity. This is a difficult movement to pull off, hard to play.

The third movement, *Andante sostenuto assai*, has a religious aura about it and expresses deep emotions. The finale, *Allegro energico*, gewaltige fuge which reminds one of Beethoven's Op.59 No.3. It is exciting and well-done. This quartet is good enough for concert and can be recommended to good amateur players. I have not played the remaining quartets.



Bernhard Sekles (1872-1934) was born in the then German city of Frankfurt am Main. Although his musical talent showed itself early, his parents did not want him to become a musician. It was only upon the intervention of the well-known Frankfurt composer Wilhelm Hill (some of whose works we publish) that Sekles was allowed to attend the Frankfurt Hochschule für Musik where he studied with Ivan Knorr. Sekles enjoyed a career as a teacher both in his native Frankfurt and in Mainz, eventually becoming director of the Frankfurt Hochschule.

His first work for string quartet appeared in 1911 as **Divertimento, Op.20**. He gave it the title 'Divertimento' to indicate that it was not a work intended to rise to the heights or plumb the depths as a work entitled 'String Quartet' might be expected to do. Nonetheless, it is a very musical work in four tightly written movements, full of high spirits, quite effective. A work which makes a strong impression in performance. The first movement, *Allegro scherzando*, is dominated by its rhythms which give the thematic material a kind of grotesque humor. It is followed by an *Allegretto capriccioso* with some very original harmony. Next comes an impressive Theme and set of spirited Variations. The theme is based on a folk melody. The work finishes with a fleet finale, *Allegro*. Fine choice for concert and experienced amateurs.

His only complete **String Quartet, Op.31** came in 1924 and is in five concise movements. The opening movement, *Andantino intimo*, has a search and mysterious quality created by the accompaniment which use tremolo a lot. *Quasi Marcia funebre*, is not a typical march, it barely sounds like a march. It is not happy but it is not very funereal either. It is a kind of grotesque limping affair. Third come an impressive scherzo, *Presto*, powerful, edgy and very nervous, making good use of pizzicato. This a very difficult movement to play, not fit for amateurs unless they are of professional ability. But this is an extraordinary movement. Fourth, *Minuetto in forma antica*, does sound like a minuet to some extent and is tonally the most conservative movement of the work. It has a kind of wayward charm. The finale, *Allegro comodo*, is upbeat, full of energy and makes a fine conclusion to an extraordinarily fine modern quartet. It can be said that it is on the outer limits of traditional tonality. It is not dissonant but it stretches the limits for sure. In my opinion, the work qualifies as a masterpiece and belongs on the concert stage where it is sure to be well received. Unfortunately, I do not think this is a work that few if any amateur ensembles are going to get through.



Joseph Servais (1850-1885), the son of the famous virtuoso cellist Adrien Servais, was born in the Belgian town of Hal. He became a gifted cellist in his own right, first studying with his father privately and then at the Brussels Conservatory. He served as a solo cellist in Weimar and finished his career as a professor at the Brussels Conservatory. He played in the famous Hubay Quartet and as a result

was well versed in chamber music style. His **String Quartet in C Major**, composed around 1880. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, is upbeat, genial and full of good spirits. A noble and deeply felt *Adagio* serves as the second movement while a modern version of a *Menuetto* comes third. The finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, is strongly rhythmic and full

of energy. Here is a beautiful work, not at all hard to play, with good part writing for all four voices. I can warmly recommend it to amateurs but not for concert performance.



Giovanni Sgambati (1841-1914) was born in Rome and lived most of his life there. He received his musical training in Umbria, where he lived as a boy before returning to Rome. He was one of the few 19th century Italian composers (Giuseppe Martucci was another) who devoted himself solely to instrumental music and shunned opera. During the 1860's, he tried to popularize German instrumental music in Italy and in so doing befriended Liszt, who at the time was living in Rome. Liszt not only wanted to help Sgambati realize his goal but also was quite impressed with his compositional talent and recommended him to several German composers, including Wagner. Most of Sgambati's important compositions are instrumental, which at the time, was rejected as a German thing by most Italians, who only had ears for opera. Undeterred, he wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor dates from 1864. It opens with a big *Allegro moderato* which is rather unusual. Searching, at times turbulent, with certain Verdi like orchestral operatic episodes. It does not always hang together, but it is impressive. The *Allegro* which comes next is a kind of majestic march, of the sort which might introduce an important personage. Later there a more lyrical interlude which sounds vaguely like a minuet. It does not last long. It, too, is very original sounding. Next is an *Andante* subtitled *Romanza*. I cannot understand that because it opens sounding like one has entered the bedroom of a person who is lying in bed having died an hour before. It is downright dead sounding, not sad, not romantic. Slowly it develops into a kind of depressed state. The finale, *Allegro assai e appassionato*, is dramatic with much thrashing about, but the thematic material is rather thin. The first two movements are very original and make a strong impression. But the final two, though also original, do not make a strong impression. For this reason I do not recommend it for concert, although amateurs might find it to their taste.

String Quartet No.2 in c sharp minor, Op.17 opens with a lengthy and very beautiful, lyrical *Adagio* introduction. It is actually long enough to be a movement on its own. The main movement, *Vivace ma non troppo*, is not as impressive. Much thrashing about with triplets but this is no substitute for good thematic material. The second movement, *Prestissimo*, is dominated by its nervous rhythm but again the thematic material is dry and forgettable and the whole thing is hard to keep together. Third, we have an *Andante sostenuto*, which, in part because of the soft dynamics, has a religious aura. Unfortunately, as the movement develops, it becomes less and less interesting. Finally, there is an *Allegro* with tremendous forward motion. It is dominated by its rhythm and here the melodic material, though hardly outstanding is nonetheless strong enough to justify the rhythmic action. But this is not an easy movement to play from an ensemble standpoint, let alone technically. I do not think this quartet rises above the level of the last two movements of his first quartet and does not belong in the concert hall or on home music maker's stands.



Writing of his visit to Shostakovich, the Polish composer Krzysztof Meyer said that in Shostakovich's study he found pictures of only three composers: Mahler, Mussorgsky and **Vissarion Shebalin** (1902-63). He was born in Omsk, Siberia where he began his musical studies. Later at the Moscow Conservatory, he studied under Miaskovsky and in 1928 graduated with the highest honors. During the 1920's he was attracted by

modernism, but during the 1930's he was drawn to traditionalism with its attachment to folkloric melodies. By 1942, he was appointed director of the Conservatory. When Stalin came to power, Shebalin was forced, as were all of the other major Soviet composers, to find some sort of *modus vivendi* with Socialist Realism. Although his music is well-known within Russia, it is virtually never heard outside of it. Chamber music always interested Shebalin and constitutes a sizeable part of his output. His nine string quartets span the length of his entire career from student right up until his death. They are an important body of work which deserves to be better known and to be performed.

String Quartet No.1 in a minor, Op.2 is dedicated to Shebalin's first composition teacher and is one of the few pieces he composed in Omsk. It is one of two quartets with only three movements. He brought it with him to Moscow where Miaskovsky was impressed enough to arrange for it to be performed publicly in 1925 by the soon to be famous Beethoven String Quartet. In the captivating opening *Allegro*, Russian folk tunes are combined with modern but entirely tonal elements. The rhythm creates a sense of movement while the music creates a spatial impression of great expanses, perhaps indicative of his native Siberia. The slow movement, *Andante tranquillo con espressione*, has a tonal affinity with Debussy. Effects such as the multiple use of trills, among others, also bring the French impressionists to mind. The finale, *Vivo*, opens in a neo-classical vein but again shows the influence of impressionism. Shebalin later wrote, "[I]n this quartet, enthusiasm for the French—which was so common at that time—comes to light." This is a good work which should be of interest to both professionals and amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in B flat Major, Op.19 was composed in 1934. The opening *Largo-Allegro* has a short, slow introduction before the engaging, angst-ridden main theme is given out deep in the cello's lowest register. The *Andantino vivo* begins with the cello playing part of a descending scale in a fashion reminiscent of the slow movement to Beethoven's Op.95. There are other similarities. Then, a short quick-waltz appears, sounding rather like Shostakovich in a playful mood. Perhaps it should be said that Shostakovich imitated since Shostakovich did not begin writing quartets until 1935. This is a very impressive movement, full of original ideas. The following *Andante e cantabile* is quite lyrical despite its occasional polytonal writing. The concluding *Allegro risoluto* by turns angular, march-like, dramatic, lyrical and thrusting, carries the listener with it to its convincing end. This Quartet did receive performances in Europe and brought some attention to Shebalin in chamber music circles. It is a fine work suitable for both amateurs and professionals.

String Quartet No.3 in e minor, Op.28 was composed in 1938 and was dedicated to Miaskovsky. The sense of scale is smaller and indeed, with the exception of the huge finale, the movements are much shorter. The melodic material to the opening *Allegro* is quite lyrical but much of this is lost against the restless accompaniment. The short *Vivace* begins somewhat aimlessly but focus is brought by the second theme. The mood of the gorgeous *Andante* is so strikingly different that it sounds as if another composer wrote it. The big finale, *Allegro risoluto*, starts with a march-like theme, as if some later-day Elgar who was living in Soviet Russia had composed it. It is followed by several gentler episodes, one of which quietly closes this original work. Again, suitable for concert and home.

String Quartet No.4 in g minor, Op.29, dates from 1940 and is dedicated to the memory of Sergei Taneyev. It begins with an *Allegro* which sounds more like a *moderato*. The music is not as harsh as the writing in the Second and Third Quartets. A languid *Andante* leads to a very effective *Vivo, alla marcia*, the main section is played entirely *pizzicato*. A contrasting and mysterious trio compliments this excellent movement. The *Andantino*—*Allegro* which concludes the quartet begins with a somber introduction to the quicker main section. The first theme, if not the

others, is a quote from Taneyev., his String Trio in D Major, WoO 1879, However the music does not sound like Taneyev. It is, save for atonality, an eclectic mix of the major elements from the late 19th century through the mid 20th. Again we have a work which should interest professionals but is not beyond amateurs.

String Quartet No.5 in f minor, Op.33 was composed in 1942 and has been given the nickname Slavonic, no doubt because of its use not only of Russian but also of Ukrainian, Polish, Slovak and Serbian folk melodies. In five movements, the opening *Moderato* actually begins with a pensive, Russian-sounding *Lento* which introduces a more sprightly dance motif. Several other lovely melodies are presented before the coda. The following *Andantino* begins softly with distant echoes from the Russian liturgy. The music, ever so slowly and cautiously, builds to a dramatic climax in the middle section before almost silently evaporating. The third movement, *Allegretto, grazioso e leggiero*, is modern and cosmopolitan, but not very Slavic sounding. A second *Andante* is then introduced. The main theme sounds rather like the Serbian folk tune Tchaikovsky used in *Marche Slave*. Only here it is in dirge form, but very effectively presented. Shebalin develops his melodic material masterfully to an extraordinarily powerful climax before he allows it to sadly slink away. The finale, *Allegro energico* begins robustly but quickly loses its energy before a lively dance takes center-stage. Some earlier melodic material is also revisited before the gay coda. Along with the First, this quartet is probably the most accessible to audiences and would be very suitable for professionals, and again within the range of good amateurs.

String Quartet No.6 in b minor, Op.34, which dates from 1943, a year after the Slavonic was composed. In the very fetching *Allegro* which begins the work, Shebalin creates a spatial panorama reminiscent of the First Quartet, and although the tonalities are more advanced, the sense of breadth is similar. In the second movement, *Andante*, Slavic lyricism, which was missing from the first movement, reappears, though not so traditionally presented as in the Slavonic Quartet. Of striking beauty is the original melody introduced in the cello's lowest register. Unlikely as it might seem, a mood of elegance is created. Next comes a nervous *Vivo* which serves as a scherzo. A short but very colorful trio section, in which the lower strings are made to sound like folk instruments, is provided for contrast. The closing *Allegro giusto* begins in a rather pedestrian manner but the material to the second theme is stronger. The soft coda, with the first violin, high above the others, is the most striking of all. Another solid work.

String Quartet No.7 in A Flat Major, Op.41 was composed in 1948 and was dedicated to the Beethoven Quartet which had worked so hard to popularize the quartets of modern Russian composers, Shebalin and Shostakovich in particular. Although I have kept Stalinist politics out of my discussion of these quartets, because of space constraints, it is undeniable that no active Soviet composer was immune from the constant meddling of the Communist Party. Compositions which failed to please led to dire consequences. In 1948, nearly all of the leading Soviet composers, Shebalin included, were accused of being "Formalists" and were required to produce new compositions which showed they were capable of "improving themselves." This generally meant the inclusion of folkloric elements. Shebalin who had always been interested in authentic folk music, had no trouble complying. The Seventh Quartet, in four compact movements, thus shows more interest in folk tunes than the Sixth did. The gentle *Allegro moderato* which opens the quartet is not overtly Slavic, but the second theme clearly reveals its folk roots. The music is ingeniously presented and sounds entirely modern but has no strident elements which might have led to serious punishment. A sprightly *Scherzo* comes next. The music to the main section is bright, and the slower trio has a very Russian melody for its theme which is played against a lively harmonic background. It is superbly done. A sad *Andante* displays two attractive, lyrical

melodies both Russian. The finale, *Allegro assai*, uses a traditional Russian wedding song for its main theme, but to non-Russian ears, its Slavic origin is well-masked. This is an excellent work which will triumph in concert and be treasured by amateurs.

By the time Shebalin wrote **String Quartet No.8 in C Major, Op.53**, he had had a serious stroke which had left him paralyzed on his right side. Twelve years separates this work from No.7. It begins with an *Andante* which, while interesting, is somewhat diffuse. It makes no urgent claim on the listener's attention until well-along. An *Allegro* follows. It is a cross between a scherzo and a march, the thematic material though very well handled is not particularly captivating. The dark-hued *Adagio* lacks direction, a quicker middle section is more interesting. The last movement, *Allegro* has an immediacy and sense of direction missing in the other movements. Direct and at first somewhat plodding, a playful scherzo section serves as a development. And, it must be admitted that the finale does not entirely fulfill its promise. Of the nine quartets, this is the only one which, in my opinion, seems to lack inspiration. But perhaps this can be explained by the fact that while working on the Eighth Quartet, Shebalin's doctors estimated his remaining life not in hours but in minutes.

Shebalin completed his last **String Quartet No.9 in b minor, Op.58** just three months before he died in May of 1963. Ten years earlier he had suffered a stroke which had permanently paralyzed his right side. Though right-handed, Shebalin taught himself to write with his left hand so that he could continue to compose. His last two quartets were written this way. The opening *Largo*—*Allegro* to this three movement work begins with a slow, dark and searching melody out of which a restless *Allegro* unexpectedly appears. Sophisticated and modern, this appealing music never takes leave of traditional tonality. The middle movement, *Andante*, begins quietly but moves into a kind of restless neo-classical mode before softly subsiding. The finale, *Allegro molto*, has such a long-lined opening theme that the music does not sound particularly fast, and certainly the subsequent themes are equally moderate in tempo. Some rather lovely lyricism springs forth in the middle section before the rather gentle close. I found this a very appealing quartet which deserves performance and can be recommended to amateurs.

To sum up, I believe Shebalin's string quartets to be a very important legacy. They do not deserve to remain unknown in the world at large. If they are able to get a hearing, I think that several of these works will enter the standard repertoire. And taken as a whole, again if they can get a hearing, I believe Shebalin's string quartets will come to be considered among the foremost composed during the last century. I strongly encourage readers to try and obtain these works.



William Shield (1748-1829) was born in the English town of Swalwell near Newcastle upon Tyne. He was trained locally as a violinist and eventually moved to London where he became a highly successful composer for the British musical theater and also a prominent performer. He was a friend of Haydn's and the two often played together. He obtained the position of Master of the King's Music and in 1823 helped to found the Royal Academy of Music. Shield wrote a set of 6 string quartets in 1782, his *Op.3*.

Of this set, **String Quartet No.6 in c minor, Op.3 No.6** is unusual on a number of counts. First, it was rare for a British work from the classical period to be composed in the minor. The fiery first movement, *Allegro*, with its pounding pedal notes and jagged cross rhythms would have almost certainly astonished his contemporaries. Equally remarkable is the extended slow movement, *Adagio*, with its written out cadenzas in the first violin part. The finale, *Allegretto*, with its 3/8 minuet rhythm veers unexpect-

edly between c minor and C Major. An historically important work from the early British classical era which can stand on its own merit and be performed in lieu of a Haydn. The other five quartets are all enjoyable and can be recommended to amateurs.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1905-1976) is probably the best known Soviet composer of the 20th century. His fifteen quartets are frequently programmed in concert, recorded numerous times and have much written about them. I have nothing more to add except to recommend them to readers.



Andrei Shtogarenko (1902-1992) was born in the Ukrainian town of Noviye Kaydaki. He studied music at the Kharkov Conservatory. As a composer, he was well-known within the Soviet Union, but he and his music remain entirely unknown elsewhere. He won the USSR State Prize for his compositions in 1946 and 1952 and was awarded the prestigious title of Peoples' Artist of the

USSR. During his long career, he served in many positions, including Professor of Composition and Director of the Kharkov Conservatory. He composed in nearly every genre, writing several works for orchestra, solo piano, voice, and also a number of film scores. Chamber music comprises only a small part of his output. Shtogarenko's works show the influence of Mussorgsky and Borodin in that many tend to be a programmatic.

The **Armenian Sketches for String Quartet**, composed in 1960, fall into this category. The opening movement, entitled, *Ode to Armenia*, begins with a brief, but densely scored and powerful introduction. This gives way to a slightly sad and mysterious section. What follows is a series of sketches, much like Mussorgsky's *Pictures*, which are meant to convey the flavor of the country. The second movement, *Scherzo*, is full of forward movement, traveling music which brilliantly conveys the exotic sounds of some of the instruments of central Asia. The *Dramatic Etude*, which comes next, is a reflective and somewhat sad essay. The lively and colorful finale, *Song of Happiness*, begins with a bumptious peasant dance, the lyrical second theme rises over a highly rhythmic accompaniment. The length of a full length quartet, this work, in my opinion, is a masterpiece. It would make a strong impression in concert, but as far as amateurs are concerned, it would require very experienced ensemble players of very high technical abilities.

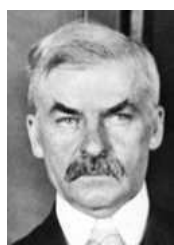


Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) was born into a Swedish-speaking family in Hämeenlinna in the Russian Grand Duchy of Finland. Although known as "Janne" to his family, during his student years he began using the French form of his name, "Jean", inspired by the business card of his seafaring uncle. With the rise of Finnish Nationalism, his family decided to send him to a Finnish language school.

Nationalism was to become a crucial element in Sibelius' artistic output and his politics. Known for his symphonies, violin concerto and tone poems, perhaps the most famous is his *Finlandia*, the stirring national anthem of Finland. After he graduated from high school in 1885, he began to study law, however, became more interested in music. From 1885 to 1889, he studied music in the Helsinki Music Academy. It was during this period that he composed some four string quartets and several smaller works for the genre.

Although his one complete string quartet **String Quartet in d minor, Op.56** completed in 1909 and known as "*Voces Intimae*", has been recorded a fair number of times, in forty years of concert going in Chicago, London, Vienna, Munich, Zurich and Salzburg, I have only heard in performed in concert once. It is in

five movements which are thematically interrelated, each movement beginning with a motif from its predecessors but in altered form. This said, each of the movements has a distinct character of its own. The opening Andante, Allegro molto moderato is brief and enigmatic. Changes in mood can be quite sudden, and the means of presentation are subtle enough that unwary listeners may miss a great deal. Next is a very short Vivace, which opens quietly. Toward the close, there are several unexpected measures of silence which precede an explosive climax. An Adagio di molto, the shortest of the five movements, but full of passion is placed third. Fourth is an Allegretto ma pesante in which alternate moods, one heavy and plodding, the other more spirited and upbeat. The finale, Allegro, is introduced by a frightening flourish of activity before the main theme is stated by the viola over bounced-bow effects in the accompanying voices. A syncopated melody follows, and these two main ideas, along motif from the first movement, alternate back and forth building to an exciting coda. One could say, it is in the repertoire, but really it is not since it virtually never gets performed live. It should be. Experienced amateurs of good technical ability can make sense of it.



Achille Simonetti (1857-1928) was born in the Italian city of Bologna. He studied violin with several teachers including Charles Dancla and Camillo Sivori, Paganini's last student. He was active in several chamber music groups in Nice, where he played for many years in a leading string quartet with Alfredo d'Ambrosio and in London for a decade as the violinist of the famous London Piano Trio. Subsequently, he became a professor of violin at the Royal Irish Conservatory. He wrote two string quartets, his Opp.14 and 16. I am only familiar with the first.

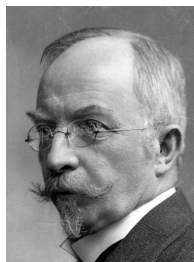
String Quartet in d minor, Op.14 dates from 1904. It was composed in Nice while he was still a member of a quartet and dedicated to that quartet. The opening movement, Allegro deciso ma moderato, is bustling and dominated more by its rhythms than melodies. The second movement, Allegro vivace, is a fleet scherzo with an attractive and nicely contrasting trio section. Third is an attractive Andante molto moderato song without words. The finale, Allegro deciso ma non troppo vivo, has an effective fugue along with some fetching melodic material. This is a nice quartet, not hard to play, and sounds good. Recommended to amateurs.



The British composer **Robert Simpson** (1921-1997) was born in the British town of Leamington. He studied with Herbert Howells in London and later at the University of Durham. He wrote some fifteen string quartets. I have not played them but have only listened to them on cds. There are some, only a few I might add, who believe him to be one of the greatest composers of the 20th century who should be ranked right up there

with Shostakovich and Bartok. They argue he is not an atonal composer like Elliot Carter or Arnold Schoenberg, that he has a definite tonal palette but that it just takes listening too. Perhaps. I have listened and relistened and while I do not find it as discordant as Carter and Schoenberg, it certainly can be at times very harsh and dissonant. In my opinion, the best that can be said for it is that in some cases it is interesting. I do not see this music gaining any traction either in the concert hall or in the homes of amateurs.

Christian Sinding (1856-1941), along with Edvard Grieg came to symbolize Norwegian classical music between 1885 and 1940. Born in the small town of Kongsberg near Oslo, Sinding, after studying music in Oslo, attended the Leipzig Conservatory where



he studied violin with Henry Schradieck and composition with Salomon Jadassohn and Carl Reinecke. Whereas Grieg's style of writing has been described as Schumann's technique combined with Norwegian folk melody, Sinding's is often and incorrectly characterized as combination of Wagner's technique with Norwegian folk melody. Although the influence of Norwegian folk melody can sometimes, but not always, be found in his music, Sinding did

not use it, as did Grieg, so extensively. Rather, it was German romanticism, and in particular the music of Liszt and Wagner, which greatly influenced Sinding. He wrote one string quartet.

String Quartet in a minor, Op.70 was composed in 1904 and dedicated to the Norwegian composer then active in Copenhagen, Johan Svendsen. It is four movements: Andante, allegro con fuoco, Andante, Allegretto scherzando, and Allegro risoluto. While there are some stunning parts to this extremely long work, it has never gained any traction. This is probably for two reasons. First is the length of the quartet. In order to be performed, it would require massive cuts. The second reason is that it sounds like it was composed by Richard Wagner. Every movement is filled with themes from his operas—Lohengrin, Tristan and Isolde and Parsifal. I have played through it several times and cannot understand how a composer of Sinding's ability could not see that there was so much repetitiveness and way too much Wagner. He could have called the work Tribute to Richard Wagner. Despite certain excellences to be found therein, I cannot recommend the work to amateurs, though it is not too hard to play. And concert performance is, in my opinion, out of the question unless one has a Sinding Chamber Music Festival or as a curiosity.



Leone Sinigaglia (1868-1944) was born in Turin, the capital of the Italian province of Piedmont. His was from an upper-middle-class Jewish family, which moved in circles that included writers, artists, scientists, and publishers. He received a first class education and, besides his native Italian, could speak French, German and English. He began his music studies at Turin's leading music academy, the Liceo Musicale. His

main teacher there was Giovanni Bolzoni, today forgotten, but a composer whose works were at one time often performed by Toscanini and several other leading conductors. To broaden his musical education, Sinigaglia often visited Milan and came to know the leading composers there such as Antonio Bazzini and Giacomo Puccini. Bazzini advised Sinigaglia to travel outside of Italy to broaden his musical horizons. Sinigaglia followed this advice and took an extended trip in 1891. From this visit to some of Europe's leading musical cities, which included Berlin, Prague, Munich, Amsterdam, Brussels, Vienna and Leipzig, At the end of it, Sinigaglia chose to stay in Vienna because he wished to study with Brahms. But like so many others, he was refused. However, Brahms arranged for him to study with Eusebius Mandyczewski, the head musicologist for the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde as well as the conductor of its orchestra. Perhaps even more important to Sinigaglia's musical development was his friendship with Oscar Nedbal, who had been a student of Dvorak, and who was a member of the famous Bohemian String Quartet and conductor of the Czech Philharmonic. Nedbal arranged for Sinigaglia to meet Dvorak in 1901. Dvorak agreed to accept Sinigaglia as a private pupil and Sinigaglia studied with him in Prague for the better part of a year. His lessons with Dvorak impressed upon him the importance of the folk music of his native country, Piedmont. Sinigaglia was eventually appointed to a professorship at the Milan Conservatory where he taught for much of the rest of his life. Sinigaglia wrote five works for string quartet. The first three, entitled Hora Mystica, Etude de Concert and

Scherzo, are relatively short—one movement affairs. There is some confusion over just when these two works were composed. Several sources state that the works date from 1891 and 1892. This would mean that they were composed before Sinigaglia settled in Vienna and before he met Oscar Nedbal. However, these sources are clearly erroneous. Why? Because the first of these two works, the Etude, Op.5, was dedicated to the Bohemian Quartet. Sinigaglia came to know of the Bohemian Quartet only through his association with Nedbal, who was a member of it. The Etude was, in fact, composed in 1894. The Scherzo was composed in 1895.

Hora Mystica (the mystic hour) was composed in 1890 and dedicated to a family friend, the important Piedmontese sculptor Leonardo Bistolfi. The work is characterized by a translucent and delicate atmosphere. As the work evolves, calm gives way to an underlying unsettling feeling of restlessness which is only resolved at the close.

Etude de Concert, Op.5 is the more interesting. As it was dedicated to the Bohemian Quartet. Just what did Sinigaglia have in mind? The obvious answer is: an encore which could be used to showcase their outstanding talent as an ensemble. So, somewhat in the tradition of Chopin, Sinigaglia composed a concert etude. There are basically two tempi—fast and faster and three sections. The work begins exactly like a pedagogical etude might. Slowly, it is developed into a melody. The second section, marked *Allegro molto*, is muscular and syncopated, dominated by its unusual rhythm. There is, however, in the middle of the section, a captivating lyrical episode, which makes for a very effective contrasting interlude, although it could perhaps have been longer. The third section is a virtuosic display of fast passage work, *de rigueur* in such pieces, and requiring precise playing from the ensemble. With the Etude de Concert, Sinigaglia succeeded in creating an outstanding showpiece. It makes a substantial and very effective encore and while it does not really pose any great technical difficulties which would be beyond experienced amateur players, it does require an ensemble that can play together through rather fast passages.

The **Scherzo for String Quartet, Op.8** was composed shortly after the Etude de Concert. It was premiered in 1895 at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. Though less substantial than the Etude, it has many of the same characteristics. It is in two sections. The first is a *moto perpetuo*. In the middle is a short, slower and more lyrical section marked *meno mosso* after which the first section is re-pressed. It, too, makes a fine encore. Like the Etude, it is not technically difficult but it does require good ensemble work.

Variations on a Theme by Brahms for String Quartet, Op.22 was composed in 1901 while he was in Vienna he got to hear a great deal of music including that of Brahms. The theme upon which his variations are based is from the fourth song of a set of seven lieder taken from Brahms', Op.62. The words for the songs which Brahms set to music were by the German poet Paul Heyse. Song No.4 begins with the words *Dein Herzlein mild* (your little mild heart). While in Vienna, Brahms, knowing that Sinigaglia planned to visit Prague, gave him a letter of introduction to Dvorak. Dvorak in turn introduced Sinigaglia to the Bohemian String Quartet, one of the most famous in Europe, its members consisting of Karel Hoffmann and Josef Suk violins, Oscar Nedbal viola and Hanus Wihan cello. The Variations, of which there are 16 were dedicated to the Bohemian String Quartet, who took it with them on tour and popularized it.

It was with the writing of his **String Quartet in D Major, Op.27** in 1905 that he found his own individual voice. The opening movement, *Allegro commodo*, is a somewhat surprising combination of several elements. There is an unquestionable Central European veneer, beneath which nervous Italian rhythms flow. The melody, which is somewhat wayward tonally, is overshadowed by these rhythms. The second movement, *Allegro vivo*, is a scherzo. Those looking for the “Sinigaglia sound” need look no

further than this movement. The combination of a fleet tempo with a light-hearted and attractive melody create a charming movement. The *Adagio non troppo* which follows, though not specifically marked as such, is in reality a theme with a set of variations. Somber and reflective, it is neither tragic nor full of pathos. The finale, *Allegro con spirito*, even more than the second movement, features the “Echt Sinigaglia Sound” with its surprising rhythms and slightly wayward melodies. Even the second and more lyrical melody is dominated by its off-beat rhythm. This work, while it cannot be said to plumb the emotional depths or to present riveting dramatic climaxes, nonetheless has many attractive features which should recommend it for performance. It is well-constructed and features both good part-writing and much charm. It does not, especially in the second and fourth movements, sound like anyone else but Sinigaglia, and it has many original ideas. Technically, it presents no extreme challenges, although as an ensemble they must deal with its intricate, but never abstruse, rhythms.

Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen—see Lombardini



František Škroup (1801-1862) was born in the Czech village of Osice. Initially trained by his father, he was sent to the nearby town of Hradec Králové and then at the age of eleven he moved to Prague where he supported himself as a choir boy and flautist. After studying law, he decided to devote himself to music, becoming a well-known conductor and composer. He held several positions in Prague and later became Music

Director of the opera in Rotterdam. While his operas and songs were once often performed, today, his music is all but forgotten except his melody which was used for the Czech national anthem *Kde domov můj* (My Homeland). He wrote in virtually every genre and was widely considered one of the most important Czech composers of the first half of the 19th century. His chamber music includes three string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.24 from the early 1840's and was dedicated to the then famous Norwegian violinist Ole Bull whom Škroup got to know when Bull was concertizing in Prague. It is important to keep in mind that Škroup was of the same generation as Rossini and Schubert when considering his style of composition which can be placed as early Romantic. The opening movement, *Allegro animato*, begins with a lovely melody in the violin but soon quick passages create excitement and forward motion. The second movement is a charming *Andante grazioso*. Next comes a Scherzo, *allegro vivace*, which is dominated by its syncopated rhythms. The finale, *Allegro appassionato*, captivates by virtue of its excitement. His gift for melody as well as his fine part-writing leaves little to be desired. Good enough for concert and recommended to amateur groups.

String Quartet in c minor, Op.25 written immediately after Op.24 begins with a rather sad but lovely *Adagio* introduction. The main section, *Allegretto*, is full of passion and forward drive but there are also some very nicely contrasting lyrical episodes. The second movement, *Andante con variazione*, has for its theme a pleasant enough melody but it is not particularly memorable, which in the end takes away from the effect of the variations which are quite well done. Next is a Scherzo, *allegro vivace* sounding rather like George Onslow's music, a composer he may have been familiar with as Onslow's quartets and quintets was tremendously popular at this time throughout Europe. It is a good movement. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, bursts forth with tremendous energy and excitement created by a lot of sawing. There are some gorgeous lyrical episodes as well. Not as strong as No.1 but still good enough for concert, and very suitable for amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in G Major, Op.29 was composed not too long after Op.25. The opening *Allegro* at first sounds of

Haydn. There is some difficult passage work especially for the first violin. It holds the listener's interest throughout. The second movement, *Andante innocente*, has a folk tune march-like melody. Here the first violin is let loose for quite some time. It is only really the second subject which follows the violin's semi-solo that we have a naïve, simple theme. Third is a Scherzo, *allegro vivace*. The opening is explosive and once again Onslow is brought to mind. This is not a bad thing for Onslow certainly knew how to write effective scherzos and this one is effective as well. The finale, *Allegro appassionato*, begins in a fashion which is hardly passionate but rather genial and playful. Once again, the first violin is cut loose for long stretches. It is a nice work and while it could be successfully presented in concert, it is the weakest of the three and makes the most demands on the first violin, who needs to be technically assured if amateurs play this w



Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884) originally Friedrich was born in the Bohemian town of Leitomischl east of Prague, then part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire. His name, if not his music, is relatively well-known though not so well-known as Dvorák he is generally regarded as the father of Czech nationalism in music. He is best known for his opera *The Bartered Bride* and for the symphonic series *Má vlast* "My Home-

land", which contains the famous symphonic poem *Vltava*, also known by its German name *The Moldau*, which is the name of the river which flows through Prague. He wrote two string quartets which have received several recordings but which are almost never performed in concert. Both are subtle *Aus Mein Leben* or *From My Life* and were obviously meant to be descriptive as Smetana himself wrote.

String Quartet No.1 in e minor dates from 1876 by which time he had gone deaf. Smetana in a letter described the quartet as follows: "*The first movement depicts my youthful leanings toward art, the Romantic atmosphere, the inexpressible yearning for something I could neither express nor define, and also a kind of warning of my future misfortune... the first theme, a passionate viola melody, representing fate's summons to take part in life's combat. The secondary theme depicts affection for romance in music and love. The second movement, Quasi Polka, is a scherzo in a polka rhythm with fugal passages, depicting the joyful days of youth when [Smetana] composed dance tunes and was known everywhere as a passionate lover of dancing. The third movement, Largo sostenuto, it reminds me of the happiness of my first love, the girl who later became my faithful wife. The movement is organized as a set of variations on two melodies with interpolated episodes. The long, insistent note in the finale...is the fateful ringing in my ears of the high-pitched tones which, in 1874, announced the beginning of my deafness.*" Smetana represents this ringing with a sustained, high E natural in the coda, preceding reminiscences of the first two themes of the first movement. Should be heard in concert and in the repertoire. Not easy to play, but not beyond experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in d minor was completed in 1883. Smetana wrote that the second quartet takes up from where the first finished: "*...after the catastrophe, it represents the turbulence of music in a person who had lost his hearing*". And hence, this quartet also was known as *From My Life*. Where as the first quartet has been more frequently recorded and is the one that chamber music players may have heard of or played, the Second Quartet is basically unknown and has not performed hardly ever if ever in concert outside of the Czech Republic and Austria. Smetana himself wrote that the first movement, *Allegro*, was unconventional, unusual in style and difficult to follow. The two principal themes are related. The first is a rising d minor scale in triplet eighth notes at an *Allegro* tempo. This transforms into the

second theme, in F Major, which also rises stepwise, but at a slower tempo. The second movement, *Allegro moderato* resembles a scherzo: the primary section is a polka with lively syncopation and the trio is a slower, graceful section. The third movement, *Allegro non più moderato, ma agitato e con fuoco*, is animated, containing at times a frenetic energy amplified by an unusual succession of imitative and march-like passages. It leads, without pause, directly into the tempestuous finale, *Presto*, which is not at all easy to play and at times harmonically dissonant, possibly due to his deafness. An interesting work, and though certainly not as appealing as his first quartet, ought to be heard in concert. For amateur groups it will be tough sledding indeed, especially in the last movement.



Julia Smith (1911-1989) was born in Denton, Texas. She studied piano and composition first at the University of North Texas, then at the Juilliard School of Music and at New York University where she obtained a doctorate. She enjoyed a career as both a concert pianist and a teacher, holding positions at Juilliard and the Hartt School of Music. She is mostly known for her large scale works such as her operas and orchestra pieces. Her style is eclectic combining elements of folk music, jazz and French impressionism. It is traditionally tonal.

Her **Quartet for Strings** was composed in 1964. It is in three movements---*Allegro ritmico*, *Lento espressivo* and *Allegro giocoso*. It is characterized by its hard driving rhythms and constantly changing time signatures, which gives the music a continuous sense of restlessness. Mostly tonal, it is not without some dissonance, but for the time, it could be considered tonally conservative. The *Allegro ritmico* has an upward reaching theme. The initial pizzicato accompaniment sounds rather like banjos. For the most part, the mood is one of frenetic nervous energy. The *Lento* begins darkly and dissonant. The theme is rather melancholic. The closing *Allegro giocoso* is as the title suggests is jocular and upbeat. Certainly American quartets touring abroad would do well presenting a modern work by an accomplished woman composer. Not a quartet for beginners, but very experienced amateurs will enjoy the challenge this fine work presents.



Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) overcame the constraints of her middle-class English background by open rebellion. Taught piano and theory as ladylike accomplishments, she became so concentrated in her studies that her family deemed them unsuitably intense, and stopped her lessons. The teenaged Ethel went on a protracted and progressively more severe strike, finally confining herself to her room and refusing to attend meals, church, or social functions unless her father would send her to Leipzig to study composition. After two years the embattled Mr. Smyth gave in, and Ethel went to Leipzig where she studied with Heinrich von Herzogenberg and got to know Brahms, whom she admired greatly, Grieg among others.

String Quartet in e minor was completed in 1911 but it was not composed all at the same time, although at first this is not clear to either the player or listener. The first two movements, *Allegro lirico* and *Allegro molto leggiero* were completed in 1902. The first movement has a yearning quality but wanders a bit. The second movement, however, is quite original and a clever scherzo. Smyth then put the work aside and did not return to it for nearly a decade when she received a commission to write a string quartet. The third movement, the *Andante* from 1911, is meditative with recitativs for the cello. The finale, also from 1911, *Allegro energico*, sports an angular fugue. There is not a lot

melody but mostly interesting rhythms. It is a decent quartet. Perhaps good enough for concert. Amateurs might like it.



Nikolai Sokolov (1859–1922) was born in St. Petersburg and studied at the conservatory there under Rimsky-Korsakov. He became one of several composers, mostly students of Korsakov such as Glazunov and Borodin, who came to be known as the Belaiev Circle, named after the important Russian music publisher, M.P. Belaiev. These composers dedicated themselves to creating a “Russian School”, (i.e. Russian-sounding). Sokolov eventually became a professor at the Petersburg Conservatory where Alexander Tcherepnin and Dmitri Shostakovich were among his many students. He wrote music for the ballet and orchestra as well as chamber music, including three string quartets. Today, if he is known at all, it is for his contributions to a collection of short pieces for string quartet by the composers of the Belaiev Circle. The collection came to be known as *Les Vendredis*. It commemorated the chamber music concerts and banquets which took place most Friday evenings at the mansion of the publisher Belaiev. All of the pieces in the collection were specifically composed for those concerts.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.7 dates from 1890 and was published by Belaiev. It was dedicated to Alexander Glazunov. The main theme of the first movement, *Allegro moderato*, is powerful and richly scored. The second theme is driving and has even more forward motion. The mood of the *Andante* which follows is darkly colored by its sad melody. A lively, bright scherzo, *Allegro*, brightens things up and is complimented by a lovely contrasting trio. The festive main theme of the finale, *Allegro*, is undeniably Russian and full of energy while the second subject is a kind rustic Russian peasant dance. Here is a work which is fun to play, sounds good and makes a good impression. Written under the influence of Rimsky-Korsakov, it is a fine example of his teaching with its appealing melodies and unusual rhythms. Recommended to amateurs but could receive concert performance.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.14 dates from dates from 1892. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, after a brief introduction, takes off with buoyant melody passed from voice and characterized by its triplet rhythm. The second movement, *Allegro*, is a lively, rustic scherzo, constantly moving forward and with some very interesting use of chromaticism. Next comes a lovely, romantic, song-like *Adagio*. The exciting finale, also an *Allegro*, might almost be called a *moto perpetuo*, relentlessly pressing forward. This is a good quartet, typical of the Belaiev circle, with lovely melodies and fine rhythmic articulations. Amateurs, in particular, will be sure to enjoy this work.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.20 was composed in 1894. It also typical of the writing of the Rimsky Korsakov school with its many fine Russian melodies. The opening movement, *Allegro assai, moderato* is also marked *molto rubato* and this constant tempo change creates added interest to what is already a very atmospheric musical canvas. The second movement, *Allegretto grazioso*, is a typical Korsakovian scherzo, light, charming and full of forward movement and not without lovely lyricism, all topped off with a contrasting trio section. Next comes a slow movement, *Sostenuto assai*, perhaps the most striking of all. Sokolov, carefully builds tension, almost unperceptively to a powerful dramatic climax after which, slowly and just as carefully, tension is lessened until the music softly fades away in a meditative mode. The finale, *Allegro non troppo*, is full of life and nervous energy. Then without warning, Sokolov inserts a fugue which begins slowly and softly but, this serves as only a brief contrasting interlude before things are brought to a rousing finish. This is one of the very best quartets from the late Russian Romantic era. It deserves concert performance and presents no great technical difficulties making it ideal for amateurs as well.

Little information can be found about **Bernhard Willibald Sommer** (1846–1935) other than the fact that he was a German composer, violinist and poet. Sommer and his music, once well-known, have with the exception of one work, fallen into oblivion. That one work, which occasionally is performed, is the old German folk song *Der Sang ist verschollen, der Wein ist verraucht*. (The song is lost, the wine is gone). However, during the last half of the 19th century, his chamber music enjoyed considerable popularity and was well thought of. The famous chamber music critic and scholar Wilhelm Altmann's, writing of Sommer's chamber music, noted that it was effective to a great extent because the part-writing was excellent, giving each voice a grateful role to play and his thematic material was fresh and pleasing to hear. Sommer's music, structurally speaking, shows the influence of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, but does not sound like theirs.

String Quartet No.3 in g minor, Op.3 was composed in 1897 and dedicated to his brother Adolf Sommer. It is in five contrasting movements. The first, an upbeat *Allegro moderato*, begins with a bang and is full of energy and forward motion. The second movement, *Adagio molto*, is a kind of Mendelssohnian song without words. Next comes an *Allegro*, which serves as a buoyant scherzo. The extra movement which comes fourth is marked *Kleine Fuge* (an ingenious little fugue) and is an *Allegretto*, finely executed and recalling Bach. The finale, *Allegro moderato*, is a toe-tapping affair from start to finish. Strong enough for concert performance, but it can also be recommended to amateurs as it presents no technical difficulties.



Leo Sowerby (1895–1968) was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan He studied organ locally before moving to Chicago to study composition with Arthur Olaf Andersen at the American Conservatory of Music. Andersen had been a student of Vincent d'Indy in Paris and Giovanni Sgambati in Rome. Early recognition came when Sowerby's *Violin Concerto* was premiered in 1913 by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra In 1921 he was awarded the *Prix de Rome* from the American Academy in Rome, the first American composer to receive this. And in 1946 he won the Pulitzer Prize for Music for an organ cantata. He spent his career teaching at the American Conservatory and working as an organist in Chicago and Washington D.C. He was a prolific composer with over 500 works to his credit, most for organ. However, he did not ignore chamber music writing several sonatas, a piano trio and a number of works for string quartet.

The **Serenade for String Quartet** is in one movement and was composed in 1917. About this time, Sowerby had struck up a friendship with Percy Grainger who introduced him to Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, a wealthy patron of music, who subsequently commissioned his *First Piano Concerto*. The *Serenade* was dedicated to her in friendship. It was premiered to great success in 1918 which led to its publication a few years later. It was one of three works which made his name and was for a while quite popular in Germany and Britain. Critics hailed it as novel, spirited and interesting with its shifting harmonies and constant interplay of voices as well as songlike melody. They also noted his adding of "bizarre" effects, referring to his frequent use of harmonics, something in which Sowerby was particularly interested and which can be heard to telling effect throughout the *Serenade*. A fine concert choice and not beyond very good amateurs



Susan Spain-Dunk (1880–1962) was born in Folkestone in Kent. She was trained as at the Royal Academy of Music where she studied both violin and composition. For many years, she served as the violist in W.W. Cobbett's quartet. She won many prizes for her compositions and her works, which were once quite popular.

Her **Phantasy for String Quartet in g minor** was composed for the prestigious Cobbett Competition which was designed to encourage the young British composers to write chamber music. Its founder and benefactor was the chamber music aficionado William Wilson Cobbett. The rules of the competition provided an alternate format, the old English Fancy for Fantasia from the time of Purcell, to the traditional four movement work which had developed from Haydn onwards. There was to be only a single movement of around 15 minutes duration embracing a variety of moods, tone colors and tempi while at the same time retaining an inner unity. Therefore, Spain-Dunk, who wrote this work with the competition in mind wrote it, as the rules stipulated, in one movement, but there are actually four distinct sections or sub-movements within the one larger one. It opens with a tragic-sounding forte melody in the cello (see below), set against triplets in the inner voices, then passed between instruments. The second section contains a gentle, pastoral permutation of the theme. This is followed by a lovely dolce version of the theme given by the first violin and then comes a fugue. The Phantasy ends with a chordal, florid version of the theme. This is a compelling, first rate work which would do well in the concert hall, where a short-er work is required, but can also be recommended to amateurs.

It is indeed interesting that in the past several decades there has been a spate of string quartet recordings of unknown or long-forgotten composers from the 18th century. Many of these quartets such as those of Florian Gassmann, for example to name but one poor soul, only serve to confirm why these works have deservedly been forgotten. But not all. The three string quartets by one **Johannes Spech** (1767-1836). **Op.2 Nos. 1-3 in g minor, E Flat Major & C Major** respectively do not deserve to rest in oblivion. The Hungarians claim him now and style him Janos rather than Johann. However, he was more or less your typical Austrian, born in the town Poszony then under Hungarian control but now in the Slovak Republic and called Bratislava. He studied composition in Vienna with Haydn and then spent most of his time in Buda and Pest, which were at the time German enclaves in Austrian Hungary. There he sought out patrons from the Hungarian nobility as had Haydn. He composed perhaps as many as twenty string quartets. I am only familiar with three, his **Op.2** quartets are dedicated to M le Comte François de Koháry. (Ferenc [Franz] Graf von Koháry) They were published in 1803 and despite the low opus number, very finished and mature works which the equal of Haydn's Op.71 and 74 quartets, if not those of Op.76. All three works are in 4 movements, and follow an Allegro, Andante, Menuetto, Allegro molto pattern. His use of all of the voices in the presentation of thematic material is exceptional for the time and superior to that of Haydn. The melodies are fresh and tuneful, never threadbare. These works are a real find.

Edition Silvertrust has reprinted **Op.2 No.1 in g minor** and I have had the chance to perform it. The opening movement, Allegro, clearly has its roots in the Sturm and Drang era. A unison opening begins the work. There is some very attractive use of chromaticism. Spech's treatment of the cello is quite exceptional in that after the first violin, it is perhaps the most prominent voice. The beautiful second movement, Un poco Andante, recalls the slow movements of Haydn. The Menuetto, un poco allegro, with its pleading main theme is particularly attractive. The charming trio section is clearly an Austrian Ländler shared by the first violin and the cello. The exciting finale is a match for those of Haydn. Recommend for concert in place of a Haydn and certainly to amateurs. Now that we know he wrote over twenty quartets, hopefully we will be able to bring a few back to life.

Louis Spohr (1784-1859 also known as Ludwig) was born in the German city of Braunschweig. From early childhood, he showed a great aptitude for the violin. He studied with the virtuoso violin-



ist Franz Anton Eck in St. Petersburg. During the first half of the 19th century he was regarded as one of the greatest violinists then performing. He wrote in virtually every genre, not the least being chamber music. He composed some 36 string quartets. As a youth, Spohr learned the string quartet repertoire of which he became quite fond, especially the works of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, whose Op.18 quartets he adored. During his lifetime and for a few decades thereafter, his quartets enjoyed great popularity and were often performed in concert and in the homes of amateurs, those with a really fine first violinist. In more than 40 years of concert going both in Europe and North American, I have never heard a string quartet of his performed in concert. I myself have played several and they are of widely varying quality. Spohr's quartets were once considered the equal of those of George Onslow. To be sure, they are not! By 1875, his music had already been already starting to disappear. Why, because players by then realized that many of his quartets were little more than a violin solos with a slight string accompaniment. Several of his quartets are what are called Quatuor Brillants. These were works which touring violin virtuosos brought with them when visiting small towns which did not have an orchestra capable of performing a violin concerto, but usually had at least a violinist, violist and cellist who could assist in playing such a work. Not all of his quartets, not even the bulk are Quatuor Brillants, but even in those which are not, the first violin often dominates far more than is usual or necessary there are also many very difficult chromatic passages which were Spohr's specialties and which add nothing and often mar what would otherwise be a movement. This said, there are many beautiful movements scattered about among his numerous quartets

String Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op.4 No.1 is the first of a set of two composed in 1807 at age 23. They are not Quatuor Brillants. The opening Allegro spirituosissimo has two appealing themes. The lyrical second theme is particularly impressive. The short Minuetto sports a pretty Ländler-like folk trio. The third movement, Adagio, has a lyrical nobility. The lovely finale, Allegro, is in part lively and at other times cantabile.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor, Op.4 No.2 Although, Spohr writes with his own voice, the influence of all of Haydn and to a lesser extent Beethoven and Mozart can be felt. The opening Allegro moderato, which immediately makes an impression. The second movement is a very Mozartean Poco adagio A humorous Scherzo, allegro, full of catchy rhythms comes next. The lively finale, Rondo vivace, with its Hungarian flavor, is treated quite originally. To sum up, both of these works show the influence of the classical masters before him, in particular Beethoven's Op. 18, of which they are by no means the equal, but there are original episodes and they melodies are appealing. They are fun to play, good enough for concert to replace a Haydn and certainly can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3, Op. 11 is a Quatuor Brillant in the style of the famous French virtuoso Pierre. Rode. It was quartets like these which clearly demonstrated the faults of this format

String Quartet Nos. 4 and 5, Op 15 Nos.1and 2 date from 1808. Since they were composed only a year after the Op.4, it should come as no surprise that they sound pretty much the same. They seem to lack the inspiration found in the Op.4. I would not recommend them for concert but to amateurs if they are curious.

String Quartet No.6 in g minor, Op. 27 was composed around 1812 and dedicated to the famous Count Rasumovsky whom Spohr had met in Vienna through his friendship with Beethoven's violinist Schuppanzigh. This is more or less a type of 'Solo Quartet' Perhaps the Schuppanzigh's quartet could play it but it cannot be recommended for concert or home.

String Quartet Nos. 7-9, Op. 29 Nos. 1-3. This 1815 set of three was dedicated to his friend the famous cellist Bernhard

Romberg, who refused Beethoven's offer to write a cello concerto for him. The cello parts in these quartets tend to be more prominent than previously. The first quartet shows harmonic advances ahead of its time, but in general these sound much the same as Op.4, with less inspiration and with the beginnings of Spohr's chromatic passage work for the first violin. Though not bad, per se, I would give these a miss.

String Quartet No.10 in A Major Op. 30 dates from about the same time as the Op.29 quartets. The work is quite romantic. The first movement, Allegro, is quite attractive although the first violin is given unnecessary facile displays of brilliance which add nothing and detract from an otherwise fine movement. The Adagio is also rather good with ornate embellishments from the first violin, finally ending in an elegiac and resigned mood. The dramatic Minuet contains a trio which evokes the sounds of a duo of hunting horns. The last movement Vivace has a lengthy, perhaps too lengthy slow introduction which leads to the very exciting main section. This was one of his more popular quartets. It could be brought to concert and recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.11 Op. 43, a quatuor brillant. As such it should left alone.

String Quartet Nos. 12-14, Opus 45 Nos.1-3 composed around 1819 were supposedly conceived with amateurs in mind as Spohr wrote this to a publisher. And, in fact, they achieved wide popularity, especially the second. The first has an Andante reminiscent of Schubert and a last movement of alpine nature. But when playing all three, it is clear why No.2 stood out as Nos.1 and 3 are clearly less interesting and inspired.

String Quartet No.13 in e minor, Op.45 No.2 begins an Allegro vivace which has somewhat sad main theme. Both it and the second subject are decent. Both the Larghetto, and the Menuetto which follow are pretty ordinary. The finale, Vivace, is energetic with the main theme having a march-like rhythm. Contrast is provided by the delicate second subject. The outer movements are good, but the middle movements are not. Frankly, I cannot see what all the praise was about given that so many other much finer quartets were being written at the same time. I see no point in including this work in a concert program, but perhaps amateurs might like it.

String Quartet Nos. 15-17 Op 58 Nos.1-3 appeared sin 1822. Of the three, **String Quartet No.16 in a minor, Op.58 No.2** is strongest. The opening theme of the Moderato first movement, of typical Spohr elegance, is taken over by the cello, leading to the second theme, one of surpassing beauty. The Andante con Variazionen presents a theme in 4/4 which is reworked in a very clever way in the next movement, a Scherzo Vivace in 3/4 time. The last movement, Rondo All'Espagnol never fails to excite both players and listeners because of its exotic rhythms. This quartet can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.18 in b minor, Op. 61 and String Quartet No.19 in A Major, Op.68 are two more of Spohr's Quatuor Brillants. I need not say more.

The **Op. 74 String Quartets**, a set of three, dating from 1826, are among the best that he ever wrote, but unfortunately, that does not mean they are good enough works deserving concert performance. **String Quartet No.20 in a minor, Op.74 No.1** opens with an Allegro vivace, which begins in energetic fashion. The main theme is powerful and interesting The minor is hardly present. A Larghetto con moto, which follows, is in the character of a song without words. The themes appear to be based on folk melody. Next comes a very rhythmic and powerful Scherzo. The tonal quality of trio section provides good contrast. In the playful and lively finale, a Rondo, a dotted 16th--32nd note rhythm, of the kind of which Spohr was particularly fond, plays a prominent role in the expression of the various themes. This quartet can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.21 in B flat Major, Op.74 No.2 opens with an Allegro vivace, which has for its main subject a rather

relaxed main theme which stands in sharp contrast to the more lyrical second melody. I cannot say the themes are memorable. The second movement, a Larghetto, has the character of a song without words and the melody is quite good. For a third movement, instead of the usual Scherzo, Spohr inserts an Allegretto with a march-like theme and a set of variations which are nicely executed. The finale, also an Allegretto, has an impressive somewhat melancholy main theme but the contrasting second subject though lighter and happier ruins the overall effect with too much first violin. Okay for amateurs but not for concert.

String Quartet No.22 in d minor, Op.74 No.3 starts with an String Quartet No.22 in d minor, Op.74 No.3 starts with an effective theme in the Allegro, but you can always count on Spohr to go and ruin it with a bunch of unnecessary passages in the first violin. These constant insertions add nothing and remind me of Tolstoy's constant interruptions in the plot of War and Peace to spout some philosophical ideas that appealed to him. The second movement, Adagio, is better. An effective Scherzo, comes third. Its trio provides good contrast. The Finale, Presto, is busy but the main subject is rather trite. There is much bustle but the thematic material does not support all of this action and it is not at all easy to play. Give this one a miss.

Three more quartets came in 1829. These were his Op.82. **String Quartet No.23 in E Major,, Op.82 No.1** lacks inspiration in the outer movements which are very repetitious and has the same type of violin passages which mar most of his quartets.. However the pastoral Andantino which comes second is better. The Scherzo and trio which follow are also decent. I can recommend the work to amateurs but not for concert.

String Quartet No.24 in G Major, Op.82 No.2 here again, the outer movements are less effective than the second and third movements. The Adagio which comes second is nicely done and the third movement, Alla Polacca, in which the cello is given a prominent role is interesting. For amateurs perhaps, concert no.

String Quartet No.25 in a minor, Op. 82 No.3 has a stately first movement which is followed by an unusual Andante. In this there are 3/8 and 4/8 bars which alternate in somewhat unpredictable ways and not necessarily simultaneously with all four instruments and as a result, it is rare that all four play it through without some confusion. The Scherzo is acceptable but unfortunately the last movement, Andante allegro is less striking. It can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.26 in E flat Major, Op.83 dating from 1830 is a three movement Quatuor Brilliant

His next set of three quartets, **Op.84 Nos.1-3** came out in 1832. The first two have many of the same problems discussed before. **String Quartet No.27, Op.84 No.1** contains a contemplative Larghetto with a fine cello part and **String Quartet No.28, Op.84 No.2** has a good first movement but the Adagio and Scherzo which follow are pretty ordinary and the Rondo finale requires a really good first violinist.

String Quartet No.29 in b minor, Op.84 No.3 starts off with a dramatic and effective Allegro. The Minuet which follows is decent, but again in the trio we fine several brilliant runs and extensive stretches of Spohr's up bow staccato. Next is a somber Adagio. The finale is an acceptable Allegretto. Although there are some fine movements and melodies here and there, I would give these works a pass.

String Quartet No. 30 in A Major, Op.93 was composed in 1837. It is one of his Quatuor Brillants.

I am unfamiliar with **String Quartet No.31, Op.132** although a biographical notes tells us that Spohr and associates apparently played this work in Mendelssohn's house sometime during 1846 the year before his death. Wagner was said to be present but there is no report as to what he thought of it.

String Quartet No.32 in C Major, Op. 141 was finished in 1849.. The first movement Allegro moderato is typical Spohr with all the pluses and minuses. The Larghetto which comes next

is better. The rhythm but not the theme of the Scherzo has Spanish bolero aura. The Presto finale is decent. Okay for amateurs

String Quartet No.33 in G Major, Op.146 was completed in 1851. The most impressive of the movements is the second, an Adagio molto. In it, the main theme is written to be played entirely on the first violin's G string. and it is a most notable Spohr adagio. The other movements again are okay but nothing special and with the usual Spohr unnecessary violin passages. Maybe for amateurs not for concert.

String Quartet No.34 in E flat Major, Op. 152 dating from 1855 at which time Spohr was 71 and running on fumes so to speak. While the quartet has decent part writing for all the voices and some nice themes, this is not anything to be brought into concert but can be recommended to amateurs.

The last two quartets **Op.155 and 157** remain in manuscript as far as I know. Spohr was a great violinist, a great musician and a pioneer with regard to his four double quartets. Unfortunately, of his thirty four string quartets, few are truly worth reviving.



Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) was without question one of Britain's most important 19th and early 20th century composers. He was fortunate in being able to study under two of the leading teachers of his day: Carl Reinecke in Leipzig and Friedrich Kiel in Berlin. While studying abroad, Stanford met Brahms and became friends with him.

Upon his return to England, he helped found an English national style and contributed to the renaissance of British music. This was particularly true in the realm of chamber music where Stanford almost single-handedly jump-started the British repertoire. Among his many students were Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Herbert Howells, Frank Bridge, Ernst Moeran, Arthur Bliss, and Percy Grainger. During his lifetime, he and his compositions were held in the highest regard. After his death, he was unfairly attacked for having been too heavily influenced by Brahms. While it is to some extent true that his early works show a German influence, sometimes Mendelssohn sometimes Schumann, and sometimes Brahms, this should really come as no surprise for two reasons. First, during the last part of the 19th century, the British, unlike the French and the Russians, had yet to develop anything that could be called a national style. Since the time of Mozart, the leading composers of Austria and Germany were held up as the models to follow: Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Schumann showed the way. Later, men like Reinecke and Kiel, who were admirers of Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn transmitted this influence to their many students, a prodigious amount of whom, like Stanford, became famous in their own right. It should be noted that very few who studied in Germany escaped or wanted to escape this German influence. Men from such disparate backgrounds as Borodin, Busoni, Respighi, Grieg and the American George Chadwick, to name but a few, are examples. As such, it seems particularly unjust to Stanford to complain that some of his early works show German influence. He composed as many as eight string quartets, several have remained unpublished until recently.

His **String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.44** dates from 1891. The opening Allegro assai is genial and full of good spirits. Stanford's inspiration and mastery of technique are very apparent. The following Poco Allegro e grazioso has the flavor of a Mendelssohnian intermezzo. The after-beat echo of the main theme in the lower voices give the music a slight dark and sinister aura. The middle section rather than being slower is a Presto. Against the rushing notes of the upper voices first the cello and then the first violin give forth a lovely cantilena melody. The slow movement, Largo con molto espressione, is sad but not a dirge. It has a stately processional quality. The finale, Allegro molto, begins as an Irish jig given offer fugal fashion. But suddenly in the devel-

opment section one hears distant echoes from the scherzo of Schubert's famous cello quintet. This is quartet with many excellent qualities to recommend it. It could to be heard in concert and warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 a minor, Op.45 was composed immediately after No.1 in 1891. All four movements are tied together by the opening theme of the first movement, which subsequently makes appearances in each of the following movements. Although showing the influence of Mendelssohn, the quartet is in no way derivative and can be judged on its own merits. The first movement is in two parts: A slow introduction Molto moderato, wherein the Motif is given out, followed by the main section Piu moto. The treatment of the two themes is quite plastic and quite good. The second movement, Prestissimo, has a sharp, somewhat dry theme while the trio is clothed by a finer melody. Perhaps the work's center of gravity is the slow movement, Andante espressivo. The motif is given a peaceful, and very beautiful treatment. The stormy middle section makes a very strong impression. The energetic main theme of the finale, Allegro molto, is at once playful but also somewhat spooky. Toward the very end, just before the exciting coda, the motif appears one last time. This quartet is a first rate work which definitely belongs in the repertoire and would no doubt be there if it the composer had been German. Highly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.64 dates from 1897 and was dedicated to the Joachim String Quartet with whom he was on friendly terms. The opening movement, A Allegro moderato ma appassionato, begins in dramatic fashion but soon lyricism takes over before the hustle and bustle returns. The second movement, Allegretto simplice, has a naive, folkloric quality and serves as a kind of intermezzo. Next comes an Andante quasi fantasia, which is an unusual cross between a legende and a song without words. The finale, Allegro feroce ma non troppo mosso, gets its forward propulsion from its hard driving rhythm. This is a good work, strong enough for concert and should interest amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in g minor, Op.99 was composed in 1906. Although it was performed several times during Stanford's lifetime, he never submitted it for commercial publication and it remained unpublished until recently (2017) The work opens with a big Allegro moderato, which is by turns lyrical, searching and dramatic. The second movement, Allegretto vivace, is upbeat and genial. Next comes an appealing Adagio which appears to have a folk tune for its main subject. The writing is particularly fine. The finale, Allegro molto vivace, starts off rather herky jerky and is primarily driven by its rhythms than by the thematic material which is not as impressive as in the previous movements. Despite this, it does hold the listener's attention and has some nicely contrasting lyrical side themes. Perhaps not as strong as the first three, but still good enough for an occasional concert performance and to be recommended to amateur players.

String Quartet No.5 in B flat Major, Op.104 was completed in 1907 and was dedicated to the memory of his friend, the famous violinist, Joseph Joachim, who had died earlier that year. Although the work was 'In Memoriam', Stanford noted, that except for the third movement, the quartet was not meant to be sad because Joachim was not the sort of man whose memory could be associated with sadness." And the opening movement, Allegro moderato, certainly can in no way be considered sad. It is an energetic and full of forward motion.. In the second movement, Intermezzo, allegretto, Stanford further instructs the players to perform the music sempre molto teneramente, that is, with added feeling and affection. The slow movement, Adagio peesante, is very intense but it is not in the beginning elegaic. As things finally quiet down the cello brings forth a theme which a bit melancholy but not particularly sad. The finale, Allegro moderato, is graceful and relaxed and as a tribute, a passage from an early work by Joachim, which takes a prominent role in the movement,

but somehow the movement lacks the dramatic excitement that one unusually associates with finales. Overall, this quartet is not as compelling as the previous four. I would not bring it to concert although amateurs might find it to their taste.

String Quartet No. 6 in a minor, Op. 122 came in 1910. Although it was performed a few times in public during Stanford's life time off of handmade copies, it was never published until 2017. It is only in three movements. The opening Allegro molto moderato starts off calmly but quickly becomes dramatic and exciting. The second theme is lyrical and fetching. The thematic material is memorable and the movement is quite well done. The middle movement, Andante quasi lento, is languid with overtones of folk melody. The jovial finale, Allegro scherzando, is an exciting and quite energetic and brisk, almost wild with what might be a trio section because it so short provides good contrast. It is not easy to play. It seems to me that this is a scherzo and was not intended to be a finale.

String Quartet No.7 in c minor, Op.166 dates from 1918. This is another quartet which was not published until 2017, although it was performed a few times prior. The opening movement, Allegretto ma con fuoco, is dominated more by its rhythms than by the thematic material which is not terribly memorable. The viola and cello, however, have a large role in stating it. The second movement, Andante, is languid, pretty sounding and leaves one with the feeling, 'that was nice' but nothing in it is really memorable. The Scherzo, Allegro molto which comes next is much better. Its thrusting forward motion is matched by appealing thematic material. A fine movement. The finale, Allegro giusto, has the feel of an upbeat tarantella. Occasional concert performance is justified and recommended to good amateurs.

String Quartet No.8 in e minor, Op.167 was completed in 1919. It was neither performed nor published in Stanford's lifetime. It was recorded and published in 2017. Stanford was 67 in 1919 and although music had moved beyond the late Romanticism, Stanford was not about to throw it out with the bath water. It is a quartet in the late German Romantic tradition. The opening movement, Allegro moderato, opens with a pleading melody in the first violin which grabs one attention from the first bar. It is by turns dark, dramatic and with the appearance of the second subject even upbeat. The Allegretto which follows has a bit of the quality of a dance-like intermezzo. The Canzona, adagio which comes third is romantic and a little melancholy. The finale, Allegro, has the aura of a rough Irish gig. Full of power, rhythmic and upbeat. This is a very good work deserving concert performance and which can be recommended to amateurs.



Roman Statkowski (1859-1925) was born in the Polish town of Szczypiorno, near the city Kalisz. He studied at the Warsaw Conservatory with Władysław Żeleński then at the St Petersburg Conservatory with Nikolai Sokolov and Anton Rubinstein. He eventually served as a Professor of Composition at the Warsaw Conservatory. His early style showed the influence of Mussorgsky and Tchaikovsky. His

later works were influenced by Richard Strauss and Hans Pfitzner. He wrote six string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.10 was composed in 1893 and was dedicated to his teacher Sokolov. I am embarrassed to admit that I played through this quartet a few years back and have no recollection of it. I almost always make notes immediately afterwards. I did not in this case. I am not familiar with his String Quartet Nos. 2,3,4 and 6.

String Quartet No.5 in e minor, Op.40 was not published until four years after his death. Written in the late Romantic style, it most likely was composed sometime shortly after the First World War. The opening movement begins with a substantial Poco sostenuto introduction which is tonally wayward and sound-

ing depressed. The main section, Apassionato is starts off as a thrashing about a bit sounding like it might be a canon. It's not. It is lyrical but not overtly so. The second movement, Presto, serves as a scherzo. It explodes forth with considerable energy and forward motion. There is frequent repetition of short thematic segments which give the music a rather fragmented feeling. Third is an Andante elegiaco in which the melancholy main theme is given out in its entirety by the cello. The writing is dense and the music intense. The finale, Allegro molto, begins in fugal fashion. There is some slight dissonance. The theme is vaguely march-like. I did not find it all that interesting. The fragmented nature of the entire work, caused by the repetition of short snippets in each movement along with a lack of memorable thematic material leads me to think this quartet would not be successful in concert. It simply does not hold the listener's attention.



Maximilian Steinberg (1883-1946) was born in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, then in the possession of Russia. He entered the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, where he studied with Liadov, Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov. He was considered highly talented and received strong support from Rimsky-Korsakov who served as his mentor. After Rimsky's death, Steinberg became a lecturer and eventually a Professor of Composition at the Conservatory. He edited and completed Rimsky-Korsakov's monumental treatise, Principles of Orchestration. Dmitri Shostakovich was among his many students. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major, Op.5 dates from 1907. The influence of Glazunov, one of his teachers, is clearly present. A feature of interest is its cyclic structure. The first movement, Allegro moderato, has a lovely main subject played over a pulsing accompaniment, The second subject is also appealing. The second movement, Allegro, is a scherzo with scale passages and a very prominent rhythm. An effective movement. Third is an Andante sostenuto is calm with downwardly chromatic main theme. The finale, Allegro moderato, makes the strongest impression, a triumphant, lively main theme bursts forth. There is a lot of sawing but it is not unnecessary. A solid quartet, a maybe for concert and a definite for amateurs. I am not familiar with his second quartet which came out in 1925.



Some critics have argued that the six string quartets of **Wilhelm Stenhammar** are the most important written between those of Brahms and Bartok. Whether this is so or not, there is no denying that Stenhammar's quartets, except for the first, represent a very important development during the twenty five years he was writing chamber music. Tonally, they range from the middle late Romantics to mature Sibelius. Though not unknown by the Swedish chamber music public, his string quartets have been sadly neglected elsewhere. Stenhammar (1871-1927) was trained as a pianist, became a virtuoso. Concert pianists who venture into the realm of the string quartet often wind up writing compositions which sound like they were composed at and perhaps better played at, the piano. This is certainly a valid criticism of some of the quartet writing of both Mendelssohn and Schumann. That Stenhammar's works show no such trait is due entirely to the fact that for nearly half of his life, he worked intimately with the Aulin Quartet, the top Swedish string quartet of its day and one of the best then performing in Europe. In fact, he toured throughout Europe with them for many years and a piano quintet was nearly always featured on their programs. Thus it is no accident that his quartets show a fine grasp of instrumental timbre and technique. The part writing is sure and evenly distributed with the instruments never

being asked to perform in a non-violinistic manner.

String Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op.2 was composed in 1894. The opening theme to the first movement, Allegro, is dominated by its rhythm. The second subject, though also syncopated, is more lyrical. The poignant second movement, Mesto, is a dirge. Stenhammar instructs the performers to play it very simply, but with deep feeling. Though classical in its restraint, eschewing romantic emotionalism, nonetheless there is a Beethovenian declamatory mood about it. An intermezzo, Molto tranquillo e comodo, follows. The playful melodies give the feel of an allegretto with an aura of calmness. The impassioned finale, Allegro energico, is said to have been based upon a Nordic folk tune, yet surprisingly, it sounds rather Spanish. This is a good late Romantic era string quartet which is highly recommended to amateur players. It could be performed in concert, however, Stenhammar had not found his own voice and this quartet lacks the originality one finds in his last five string quartets. It is a very solid, first rate work, sounding very Central European, a work which could have been written by any number of German composers, excepting Brahms and for this reason, and because his quartets are virtually never programmed outside of Sweden, and as they certainly should be, I think this is best left out of the concert hall.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor, Op.14 dates from 1898. Although indebted to Beethoven, it was really his first major chamber work full of original ideas and construction, and the first of a series of very important string quartets. The extraordinary opening movement Allegro moderato, begins mysteriously but quickly builds into a powerful and deeply troubled mood with an implacable "stamping" rhythm as a kind of inexorable background. Next we hear an elegaic and reflective Andante, quasi adagio. In the restless scherzo, Allegro vivace, Stenhammar quotes the main theme from the scherzo of Beethoven's Op.95 quartet. His treatment is at once clever, highly imaginative and very effective. The finale, Allegro energico e serioso, once again, drama and pathos return in the form of harsh and short "stamping" rhythms which are juxtaposed against a wild moto perpetuo theme. Unique sounding, this is unquestionably a work whose originality and quality clearly mark it for the concert hall. It belongs in the literature and is entirely manageable by amateurs to whom it is highly recommended.

By the time Stenhammar wrote his **String Quartet No.3 in F Major, Op.14** his own voice had fully emerged. Its lovely, tranquil opening movement, Quasi andante, is followed by a breathtaking Presto agitato, It begins full of fire but there are somber interludes of doubt, of "night thoughts". The Presto is linked to a powerfully brilliant and beautiful fugue. Next is a Lento sostenuto, which are a set of highly lyrical and emotional variations. The finale, Presto molto agitato, is a kind of fantasia and fugue. In it we hear haunting echoes of what has come before. This is a masterpiece by any standard which belongs in the concert repertoire. It can be managed by experienced amateurs who are good ensemble players, but hearing a recording and studying the parts first will be of tremendous help.

One of the mightiest quartets in the entire history of Swedish music was what Sweden's leading critic wrote at the time of **String Quartet No.4 in a minor, Op.25**. It was begun in 1904 but only completed in 1907. It was dedicated to his friend, Jean Sibelius. Here is a quartet which fuses Nordic folksong with a Beethovenian development technique, but also incorporates the lyricism of the late romantic movement. The opening Allegro ma non troppo begins with a dramatic, downward spiraling passage which serves as the motif of the highly chromatic music which follows. In the background we hear snippets of an old folk ballad but are never really allowed to hear the whole. By contrast, in the beautiful Adagio which follows, Stenhammar presents the entire folk tune which is a plaint, a sad and somewhat pleading song. Next comes an energetic and frenetic Scherzo with unusual alternating rhythmic hand-offs between the voices. The superb finale,

Aria variata, is exactly what the title indicates. A set of variations on an opening song. Composers who use a set of variations for the finale almost invariably founder, not Stenhammar. The theme is taken from the Swedish folksong, *And the knight he spake with young Hillevi*. There are ten variations which follow and they are as good or better than any other set ever written for string quartet. A superb work which belongs in the repertoire. Not as hard to put together as No.3 from an ensemble standpoint, but it nonetheless requires experienced players of a high technical standard.

String Quartet No.5 in C Major, Op.29 subtitled by Stenhammar as "Serenade" was begun in 1909. Quite possibly Stenhammar felt the need for something lighter after the powerful and searching Fourth Quartet. He begins his serenade with a lively and playful Allegro molto con spirito. Though the music sounds nothing at all like Haydn, nonetheless, the spirit of Haydn and Viennese Classicism in the structural treatment of his themes. The second movement is unquestionably the most striking. Entitled Ballata, it is based on the Swedish folksong Riddaren Finn Komfusenfej. (The Knight Finn of Fusenfej goes a-courting). Stenhammar related how his uncle, who lived with the family, used to sing this song to the children. First comes the theme which the viola presents in full. The song relates how Fusenfej asks the King for his daughter's hand in marriage. Each succeeding variation paints a portrait of different personages, the Queen, the princess' brothers and sisters. It is a jolly tale which without warning turns into an elegy in which Fusenfej dies. It would be hard to find a more impressive set of variations. Next comes a short, very swift Scherzo, which literally explodes after the final soft notes of the Ballata die away. There are several surprises in this spectacular little gem. The finale, Allegro molto, is also quite fast and at times becomes a perpetuum mobile. It is full of high spirits and humor and brings the quartet to an end in a rousing fashion. Again we have another masterpiece which if given by professional quartets will reap much praise from audiences. Certainly, it is well within the reach of experienced amateur players and highly recommended to them.

String Quartet No.6 in d minor, Op.35 was composed in 1916. It was not a particularly happy time for Stenhammar. It distressed him that World War One was destroying the old European civilization and on a personal level, his closest musical friend, the Swedish violinist Tor Aulin, had recently died. Hence the moods expressed in the Sixth Quartet are those of sadness, depression, anger, and resignation. One is reminded of the same moods found in Beethoven's last quartets, and, it is a certainty that Stenhammar had those works in front of him at the time he composed String Quartet No.6. The opening movement, Tempo moderato un poco rubato, though not funereal, clearly conveys the feelings sadness and loss. The tempo never speeds up and the players are warned off keeping a strict tempo. The Allegro which follows, while not exactly bright, does have a lighter bustling, if somewhat subdued quality. Next there is a beautiful, Poco adagio, valedictory and resigned. It is in the startlingly powerful finale, Presto, that highly charged emotional torrents are released. The main theme is a reverse paraphrase from the scherzo of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Long unisono passages give the music an almost unmatched intensity in the literature and remind one of the power of a Sibelius symphonic work. This is an outstanding masterwork. Stenhammar had pared down his technique to achieve a taut simplicity and the work plays easily with few if any real technical difficulties. Though it belongs in the concert repertoire, amateurs will surely enjoy the chance to play a work of this caliber without struggling.

Charles Edward Stephens (1821-1892) was born in London. He studied piano and violin at the Royal Academy of Music with Cipriani Potter who had studied with Josef Woelfl and Henry Blagrove a student of Louis Spohr. He pursued a career as a composer and organist. His **String Quartet in G Major, Op.21** was

submitted for the 1880 competition held by Trinity College London. It won first prize and was published in 1881 by the firm of Schott of Mainz, Germany, an indication of the quality with which it was regarded. The opening theme to the first movement, *Allegro moderato*, is a jovial, march-like subject whose recurring triplet motif gives the music considerable forward motion. The second movement is an engaging, lively *Scherzo allegro* with a finely contrasting trio. Third is an *Andante sostenuto*. It is a sad *Sicilienne*. The finale, *Rondo allegretto*, is upbeat and playful. This work can be recommended but is not concert performance.



William Grant Still (1895-1978) was one of the most important African-American composers of the 20th century. Although classical music was his first love, he also wrote for radio and television. Still's orchestral works have been widely performed, at least in the United States, but his chamber music is not well-known. He was sent to college by his mother to study medicine but in the end studied composition with Edgar Varese at Oberlin and later with George Chadwick at the New England Conservatory. He wrote one string quartet and several other works for the genre.

His **Lyric Quartet** which dates from 1960. He gave the work two very different subtitles—the first, *Lyric quartet* and the second, *Three Friends and Impressions*. The movements were titled *The Sentimental One*, *The Quiet One* and *The Jovial One* or alternatively *On a Plantation* (moderately), *In the Mountains of Peru* (moderately slow) and *In a Pioneer Settlement* (moderately fast) Strangely enough, despite the fact that Still may have had some sort of program in mind for this music, it does not sound like program music. The first movement has a gentle theme for its main subject. For the most part, it is American sounding, occasionally seasoned with vague hints of French impressionism. It is highly romantic throughout. The second movement sounds rather like a continuation of the first, with the themes and tempo being almost identical. This creates a little monotony. The bright finale is much more energetic and angular. There is a very interesting middle section which to my ears sounds rather like a Klezmer interlude. There is no question that this is the most striking of the movements. An interesting work, it could be brought to the concert hall perhaps and amateurs might enjoy it.

His **Danzas de Panama** is a four movement work dating from 1948. It is based on a collection of Panamanian folk tunes which were collected by Elizabeth Waldo in the 1920's. Although there are putatively only four dances presented, each movement has at least two and sometimes three separate dances within it. The opening movement *Tamborito* immediately captures the listener's attention with the instrumentalists percussively striking the sides of their instruments, creating the rhythm for this highly chromatic introduction which immediately leads to a sadder and slower dance that is also quite chromatic. For the rest of the movement, Still ingeniously juxtaposes these two dances, one after the other seamlessly. When the faster dance returns, it is in two sections, the first fast and up-beat the second more melancholy and sounding like a close relative of the tango. The movement ends surprisingly on a soft glissando. Next comes *Mejorana* which sounds like a carefree Panamanian waltz. The forceful middle section is a somewhat ominous dance in two. The slow third movement, *Punto*, has a gentle and very familiar Mexican sound to it. It is the kind of thing one hears in the movies when Mexican cowboys return to their hacienda at the end of a day's work. The middle section in 6/8 is in the minor and more robust. The last movement, *Cumbia y Congo* begins again with a percussive hand-pounding to a high-spirited and fast dance. At first, it sounds purely African but very quickly a heavy dose of Latin melody is added to the mix. The coda is brilliant and exciting. Any one of these four short movements could serve as a very effective en-

core. Together, they form an impressive tour de force. Definitely a great choice for the concert and amateur players.

The **Prince and the Mermaid Suite** dates from 1965. The Suite originally was written for piano and then adapted for quartet by Still and used in Carol Stone's play of the same name. In four movements, the first, entitled *Song of the Sea*, is moderately slow, melancholy and dreamy. The second movement, *Waltz*, sounds like a gentler version of the kind of dances that Copland wrote in *Rodeo*. This is followed by a short *Minuet*, which begins rather discordantly and hardly sounds like that dance. The brighter main section, though a dance, is not really a minuet. The last movement, *Scherzo*, is also a misnomer, although lively and energetic. These are four engaging short movements and though entirely tonal, do not, in my opinion, sound anything like program music. Again, an interesting work which can be recommended to amateurs but I think best left out of the concert hall.

Summerland, composed in 1936, was part of a three movement work for piano but subsequently was arranged for several other combinations, including string quartet, by Still. Hard to categorize, it is undoubtedly in the American romantic tradition and very lyrical. Interesting, recommended for amateurs.

In 1968, Still wrote five works for string quartet each consisting of two movements that he called **Little Folk Suites**. The suites utilized folk melodies from around the world. *Los Indios*, is based on material from Brazil and Peru. It is slow and meandering and does not sound like anything from those countries. The very effective second selection, *Wade in the Water*, is a lively American Negro Spiritual. The title refers to the parting of the Red Sea. The next selection is entitled *Salangadaw* and is said to have been based on Creole folk material. It is a slow, sad dance with a Latin flavor. The short and bright last selection, *Tant sirop est Doux*, is based on folk material from Martinique. These suites are attractive and can be recommended for concert and home.



Richard Stöhr (1874-1967) was born in Vienna. His father insisted that he study medicine and Stöhr only formally studied music after receiving an M.D. He entered the Vienna Academy of Music and studied composition with Robert Fuchs, receiving a doctorate in 1903. He immediately obtained a teaching position at the Academy and was appointed a professor of composition in 1915, a position he held until 1938. Although Stöhr steadily composed throughout these years, he was better known as an expert on music theory, having written a well received text on the subject. In 1938, he was forced to flee Austria because of the Nazi takeover. He emigrated to the United States. There, he obtained a similar position at the Curtiss Institute of Music. Among his many students were Leonard Bernstein, Erich Leinsdorf, Herbert von Karajan, Erich Zeisl, and Samuel Barber. He wrote at least four string quartets and another work entitled *Ten Intermezzi* for string quartet, but although three of the quartets and the *Intermezzi* have received a recording, as of this writing, only the first quartet has been published. The rest has been performed off of copies from his manuscripts.

His **String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.22** was composed in 1903 but only published in 1911. The opening movement, *Allegro appassionato*, begins in dramatic fashion with the urgent main theme and a pulsing accompaniment providing considerable forward motion. Rather than developing this theme, Stöhr immediately presents a somber, but more lyrical second subject. Again tension is quickly built to a dramatic climax and again, Stöhr opts to forego development in favor of presenting a third subject. But then, the rest movement is given over to the most intricate and effective development of all three themes. The main subject of the lovely second movement, *Andante cantabile*, is languid and tonally wayward, in many ways quite modern for its time. A *scherzo*, *Molto vivace*, comes next. It is a merry, lopsided, synco-

pated dance, gentle, modern and with post romantic tendencies. The finale, Allegro giusto, is marked Alla Zingarese and the music is energetic and rustic, bringing to mind the music one might have heard at a peasant wedding. But following this, Stöhr changes gears and the music exudes an exotic aura. The quartet is strong enough for concert and can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major, Op.86 was composed in 1942. However, it languished in manuscript form until 2020 when it was published by Edition Silvertrust. Close to 40 years separate it from his first quartet written in 1903 in Vienna. It was composed in Colchester Vermont, three years after he was forced to flee his native Austria. It might be said that the composer in this work reconnected with his Austro-Hungarian past, writing a work in the late Romantic idiom. The lilting, lelsurely main theme to the opening movement, Allegro moderato, is brought forth by the cello alone after which the others join in. The second subject is martial in mood. This in tum is followed by a somewhat sad melody. The second movement, Scherzo, presto, is the kind of Mendelssohnian scherzo Felix might have written had he been alive around 1900. The meter constantly changes between 6/8 and 9/8 and then in the trio section, which appears without warning, between 2/4 and 3/4. The third movement, Adagio mesto, as suggested by the title, has a rather depressed mood. Recurring sextuplets play an important role. The big finale, Allegro giusto, opens with a flourish. What follows is a series of appealing rustic folk dances.

String Quartet No.3 in a minor, Op.92 was composed in 1943 not long after he finished his second string quartet the previous year. However, it too languished in manuscript form until 2020 when published by Edition Silvertrust. Like the second quartet the third is also in the late Romantic idiom but here his ideas seem to be evolving where at times he seems to be trying to break free from the past. The work opens with a mysterious, very chromatic Poco maestoso introduction. The main section, Allegro moderato, (our soundbite begins here) harks back to Bach and yet there is a strong wayward tonality expressed through chromaticism. This in turn leads to be a beautiful hymn which might have come from New England church music. The beautiful second movement, Andante sostenuto, is the most traditional of the quartet which has both feet clearly in the late romantic. The faster middle section is a highly original march. Next a Scherzo which starts out as if Bach had composed but very quickly a long-lined lyrical theme is introduced and played over the fugue which then disappears altogether. The finale also begins with a slow introduction, Un poco lento. The quicker main section, Allegro con brio, is full of pulsing chromaticism. This work belongs in the concert hall but also on the stands of good amateurs.



Antoni Stolpe (1851-1872) was born in the Polish town of Pulawy. Contemporaries referred to him as a genius. But thanks to his early death at age 21, followed quickly thereafter by that of his father, many of his works were lost and his name disappeared altogether. Few facts are known about Stolpe's life. What facts there are come from reminiscences of Noskowski, his friend from school days.

It was Noskowski who wrote an obituary notice in the year of Stolpe's death. From it we learn Stolpe's father was a music teacher, who despite Antoni's early and prodigious talent, refused to make a prodigy of him. He entered the Warsaw Institute of Music where in 1867 he won the Grand Prize for Piano and Composition. In 1869, he went to Berlin, where he studied composition with Friedrich Kiel and piano with Theodor Kullak. Within few months, he was teaching the piano class himself at the Berlin Conservatory.

His **Variations for String Quartet** are quite substantial, lasting nearly as long as a Haydn quartet, but, of course, not sounding anything like that. Without doubt, these are the equal of the best of this genre, for example, those of Rheinberger and Fibich. They bear witness to the fact that Stolpe was a talent of the first rank. Could be brought to concert where a short work is required and can be recommended to amateurs.



Ewald Straesser (also Sträßer 1867-1933) was born in the Rhenish town of Burscheid not far from Cologne. After studying music locally, he entered the Cologne Conservatory where he studied with Franz Wüllner. After graduating, Straesser held a teaching position there and then later became a professor at the Stuttgart Conservatory. Between 1910-1920, Straesser's symphonies enjoyed great popularity and were performed by the leading conductors of the day such as Artur Nikisch, Richard Strauss, Willem Mengelberg, Felix Weingartner, and Wilhelm Furtwängler. His chamber music was also frequently performed by the then active leading ensembles. He wrote five string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in e minor, Op.12 No.1 is the first of a set of two which were composed in 1901. It begins with a Moderato that has a very rhythmic main theme full of potential which is followed by a more lyrical second subject. A very impressive and atmospheric slow movement, Larghetto, comes next. It features a riveting viola solo played over a martial accompaniment in the violins. The third movement, Allegro molto, is a charming and lively scherzo with a very original middle section. The finale, begins as an Andante with a simple folk theme and is followed by a artistic and masterly set of variations. This is a very original, very late Romantic work worthy of the attention of both amateurs and professionals. It deserves concert performance.

The opening movement to the second quartet of this set **String Quartet No.2 in G Major, Op.12 No.2**, Allegro con moto, has three themes, the third, which is especially effective, appears shortly before the end. The second movement, Prestissimo, could serve as an effective encore. After a short, wild introduction, Praeludium, comes a fleet tarantella set off by a charming waltz-like trio. Next comes a somber and powerful Andante in which a short agitated section appears in the middle. The finale, Allegro animato, quasi vivace, begins with a spirited solo in the viola and is full of good spirits. The quartet plays well, would be quite effective in concert where it should be brought and certainly should be of interest to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in B flat Major, Op.15 dates from 1913. It is a fine, reflective work, but it requires more than one playing to appreciate it. This is particularly true of the first movement, Allegro. The warm Adagio ma non troppo, which is in the form of a romance, is more immediately approachable. Next comes a pretty Scherzo, Presto con fuoco, which is dominated by its syncopated main theme and framed by a superb trio section. It is the finale, Presto non troppo, which makes the strongest impression upon first hearing. It begins with a serious, slow introduction that leads to the main part of the movement which is very close to being a tarantella. The quartet offers no especial technical difficulties for the players and as such can be recommended to amateurs. Because a concert audience is only going get one hearing, I cannot recommend it for concert performance.

String Quartet No.4 in e minor, Op.42 dating from 1920, is remarkably concise by comparison to his first three quartets. It departs from convention insofar as to have an Andante serioso for its final movement--very beautiful this, with a melodious fugue in the middle section. The restless first movement, Allegro non troppo, takes its character from the passionate main theme. The second movement, Allegretto tranquillo, is a dainty and most effective intermezzo. It makes a perfect encore piece. The third

movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, is a type of very lively scherzo, with an expressive and slow middle part. Suitable for the concert hall, it can also be recommended to experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.5 in g minor, Op.52 dates from 1925.

The first movement, *Moderato passionato* requires careful listening because of the plasticity of the thematic material. However, is the material impressive and masterfully executed. The second movement is a fleet, tonally beautiful *Intermezzo scherzando* in which the minor and the major alternate. The *Poco andante* which follows takes the listener into a realm of otherworldly beauty with its deeply felt melodies. The finale, *Molto passionato*, is a kind of highly creative fantasy. This is a first rate early modern work, which shows how to advance the boundaries of tonality without resorting to atonality. Not to be missed by either experienced amateurs as well as professionals, who would do well to bring this fine work to the concert stage.



Richard Strauss (1864-1949), of course, needs no introduction. His orchestral compositions and operas have made him one of the best known composers of the late 19th and 20th century. While Strauss did not, in later life, devote much time to chamber music, in his earlier years he tried his hand at several different types of chamber works composing a string quartet, two piano trios, a piano quartet and several instrumental sonatas. He took Schumann and Mendelssohn as his models.

String Quartet in A Major, Op.2 dates from 1882. It is typical of his style at this time. Later, of course, he came under the influence of the new tonalities of Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner. Although the Quartet is the work of an 18 year old, knowledgeable critics have never considered it a juvenile work. The opening *Allegro* begins in a rather formal fashion. The main theme is not immediately obvious, however, the lovely second theme is quite transparent. The music is genial and moves at a leisurely pace for some time until it finally builds to a very Mendelssohnian climax. The second movement is a brilliant Scherzo. A quick two-step begins affairs, but a long-lined melody appears above the jumping creating a very interest contrast. The development, however, is entirely given over to its rhythm. The trio section is akin to waltz. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, has a pleasant and playful melody for its main theme. The second theme is gentler and presented in choral fashion. Its initial appearance is quite brief but later, it plays a much larger role. Certainly this is a work that amateurs will enjoy. But really the only reason to bring it the concert hall is that it is by Richard Strauss and demonstrates his early style before he became enamored by Liszt and Wagner.



Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) is one of the best know composers of the 20th century and needs no introduction. However, very few people know that he wrote anything for string quartet. He wrote one piece.

Three Pieces for String Quartet. These were arranged from a four-hands on one piano version finished in 1918. The three movements are entitled *Danse*, *Eccentrique* and *Cantique*. Of the three the only one which is engaging, in my opinion, is the very short first movement, *Danse*, sounding of the jazz era. It could make an brief encore. The last two movements sound like someone who has been hit over the head and left in a dark room and is slowly coming to. Not very interesting at, at least to me, but perhaps to Stravinsky.

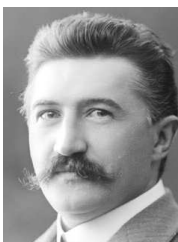
Joseph Suder (1892-1980) was born in the German city of Mainz. He studied piano, cello and composition at the Munich Conservatory after which he pursued a career as a teacher and



composer. Of his three string quartets, I am unfamiliar with the first.

String Quartet No.2 in e minor dates from 1939. It is in three movements and is entirely tonal, sounding like it could have been written in 1890. It is an attractive work. The first movement, *Bewegt*, sounds Brucknerian. The themes are yearning and searching. The middle movement, The gorgeous middle movement, *Adagio*, takes off where the first movement left off. Also Brucknerian, it is the center of gravity of the quartet. The finale, *Allegro*, continues on in the same vein, searching but more powerful and bring a greater sense of drama. This is a fine quartet, a good concert choice. Not hard to play, it can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in a minor was finished in 1949. Again, this tonal work sounds, for the most part, like it could have been written before 1910. Here an there, he adds some dissonances. How could he not, in 1939. The first movement, *Allegro*, is quite chromatic, and at first thrusting but later quite lyrical though laced through and through with chromaticism. The second movement, *Langsam, doch nicht schleppend*, is calm and a little sad, but attractive. The *Intermezzo un poco moto*, is the most modern sounding of the work, but not terribly modern sounding. Lots of chromatic passage work. The finale, *Allegro moderato*, is pleasant but perhaps a little too lax for a memorable finale. A good but not great work. Manageable by amateurs but I see no reason to bring into concert.



Josef Suk (1874-1935) was born in Krecovice in southern Bohemia, then part of Austria. He studied piano, violin and organ with his father who served as village choirmaster. His exceptional talent led to his being enrolled at the Prague Conservatory in 1885 at the age of 11 where he first studied violin. Eventually, he became a composition student of Antonin Dvorak. He graduated in 1891, and kept up a friendship with Dvorak, whose daughter he married in 1898. He formed what became the world famous Bohemian Quartet with three of his fellow students. Suk played second violin with the Quartet for most of his life. From 1922, he taught at the Prague Conservatory. Among his many students were the composer Bohuslav Martinu and the pianist Rudolf Firkusny. Suk served as the Conservatory's director after 1924, on and off, until the end of his life. Suk's early works show the influence of Dvorak, and to a lesser extent, Brahms, but are highly original in conception.

String Quartet No.1 in B Flat Major, Op.11 dates from 1896 and while one hears echoes of Dvorak in the opening *Allegro moderato*, structurally, the working out of the themes in very unconventional and the use of the instruments to create polyphonic effects is well beyond Dvorak's own writing. The energetic second movement, *Tempo di Marcia*, is both Czech and original sounding. Little of Dvorak can be found here although in the lovely *Adagio non troppo*, at times, we hear the intimacy and highly charged personal musical language of Suk's teacher. But in the bright and clever finale, *Allegro giocoso*, the makings of the modern Czech school can clearly be heard. This is a first rate string quartet highly recommended to professionals looking for a post-Dvorak work with some Czech modernism in it. Competent amateurs will also get much enjoyment from this music.

The String Quartet op. 31 is in complete contrast to the op. 11. Composed in 1911, it shows that he had moved away from Dvořák and also from the late Central European Romantic style. Here and there, one can hear brief snatches of traditional melody, but mostly it is filled with wayward chromaticism. It is in one movement with four sections. Each of the first three sections are adagios. The work opens with quite an intense *Adagio ma non troppo* with this increasing through the movements. Things cul-

minate in a turbulent final Allegretto. This is a complex work, hard to follow on first hearing. It might be manageable by experienced amateurs if they listen to a recording and study their parts. It might be received well in concert, keyword is might.

Suk also wrote two other works for string quartet. The first became known as **Three Pieces for String Quartet**. The first two works, Barcarolle and Ballad were written while Suk was at the Prague Conservatory. The third, Menuet, was also an early work. The Barcarolle, is the rewritten second movement an unpublished string quartet composed around 1888. The Ballad for string is one of a series of three ballads composed in 1890. One was for violin and piano, a second for Cello and Piano, and the third for string quartet. The Menuet started out life as a movement in a piano sonata composed in 1897. Suk reused it twice more, once for a string quartet and then in a suite for piano. Some scholars believe it was intended as a small contribution to the concerts of the famous Bohemian String Quartet, of which Suk was the second violinist. The three are appealing, could be used as concert encores or as a short suite. Recommended to amateurs.

Meditation on an Old Bohemian Chorale, Op.35 Suk also arranged it for string orchestra. It holds an unique position in his oeuvre in that it was intended to ignite the smoldering Czech nationalist movement. It was written in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I which the Czechs hoped would finally destroy the Austrian Empire, of which they were a part, and lead to their independence. The Old Bohemian Chorale is none other than Svatý Václav (St. Wenceslas), the patron saint of Bohemia. Among the words to the mediaeval song is the rousing verse "Let not our nation and future generations perish." It is a four-part polyphonic work, flexible in its modulations with a free development. An interesting work but I cannot see it in concert.



Two words one does not generally associate with **Sir Arthur Sullivan** (1842-1900) are "string quartet". He did however compose two short pieces for this ensemble,

The first is a one movement **String Quartet** lasting about 11 minutes. It was written in 1859 while Sullivan was studying under Moscheles at the Leipzig Conservatory. Sullivan was the Royal Academy of Music's first Mendelssohn Scholar and his quartet shows the great man's influence but without being a mere imitation, much the same way Mendelssohn's string symphonies show the influence of Bach and Mozart. The piece is a fluent, accomplished work and certainly a tribute to a boy of 16. It was performed at Leipzig several times and garnered critical acclaim for the young Englishman. It is tuneful and exciting with fine part-writing. Really a historical curiosity if brought to concert. For amateurs.

The second work, a **Romance in g minor**, is also from 1859. Here the influence of Mendelssohn is more pronounced. The mood and style are quite similar to a Mendelssohnian intermezzo. A lovely 3 minute morsel, it would make a charming encore.



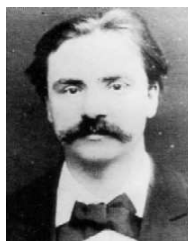
Hermann Suter (1870-1926) was born in the Swiss town of Kaiserstuhl. He studied with Hans Huber at the Basle Conservatory and later with Carl Reinecke at the Leipzig Conservatory. He worked as a conductor and teacher at the Zurich Conservatory. Later, he became director of the Basle Conservatory. His works show the influence of Brahms, Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler. Suter was not a prolific composer but the works

that he produced were very well put together and first class. Mostly he composed works for voice, however, he did not ignore chamber music leaving three string quartets and this string sextet.

String Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op.1 was published in 1905 but dates from five years earlier. It is a very good work distinguished by its impressive thematic material. The first movement, Allegro brioso is fresh and lively. The short second movement, Moderato con svogliatezza, etwas verdrossen, serves as a kind of scherzo. It is the most singular movement of the quartet by virtue of the etwas verdrossen (somewhat morose) instruction which creates a sullen mood, not only through the use of harmony and melody but also by its rhythm. Next comes a warm and deeply felt Adagio which might be styled a romanza. The middle section contains an astringent fugal section. The finale, Allegro molto, is very effective by virtue of its rhythm and jovial themes. A good choice for concert and not beyond the scope of experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in c sharp minor, Op.10 dates from 1910. Suter wrote that he was inspired and emboldened to write such a work by Beethoven's Late Quartet Op.132. It consists of two substantial movements played without pause. It clearly is work of deep feeling. A stream of attractive melodies run throughout the whole work. In the first movement, out of the gloom of the Moderato malinconio comes an intimate vocal theme in the Allegro which follows. In the second section, a dance-like theme is followed by a spirited and magnificent set of variations. Especially captivating is a tranquillo episode in the noble Adagio sostenuto. This is not an easy work to play but it can be recommend for concert performances and good amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in G Major, Op.20 dates from 1918. It consists of three extensive movements. There is no pause between the first two. In the first and the last movements, the composer uses as a theme the 'call of the blackbird' and has come to be known (at least in German lands) as the 'Blackbird Quartet'. The first movement begins with a Commodo introduction followed by the main section, Allegro non troppo, ma con spirito. It is difficult to choose between the two main subjects as to which is the more appealing. The writing is extraordinarily fine and quite spirited. The second movement, Allegretto vivace e grazioso, is a kind of children's dance of simplicity, but also nobility. The finale begins with a very moving, substantial Adagio introduction and is followed by a dance-like Presto which is rhythmically intricate. This movement, too, is highly captivating. Good choice for concert but only very experienced amateur players.



Johan Svendsen (1840-1911) gained a reputation as a rising star while he was still a student at the Leipzig Conservatory, where by general consensus he was regarded as one of the most talented students. Svendsen was born in the Norwegian capital of Oslo and learned to play both the violin and clarinet from his father. By the time he finished school, he was working as an orchestral musician, and occasionally made short concert tours as a violinist. In Lubeck, on one of his tours, he came to the attention of a wealthy merchant who made it possible for him to study from 1863-67 at the Leipzig Conservatory. He began his studies with Mendelssohn's favorite violinist, Ferdinand David, but problems with his hand forced him to switch to composition, which he studied with Carl Reinecke. Afterwards, Svendsen worked primarily as a theater director and conductor. He achieved considerable fame as the latter and, during the last 20 years of the 19th century, was considered the leading Scandinavian conductor. All of Svendsen's chamber music was written while he was at the Leipzig Conservatory, yet these works were not then, and should not now, be considered student works. His works won prizes and received public performances to acclaim.

String Quartet in a minor, Op.1 dates from 1865. It created a sensation upon its premiere. The opening Allegro has for its main theme a driving, syncopated dotted subject which while not specifically from Norwegian folk melody, nonetheless has a Nor-

dic sound to it. The dense texture at times approaches the orchestral. Both themes to the impressive second movement, *Andantino*, sound as if they are folk melodies. Svendsen's treatment of the material is masterly and gives no hint that it is the work of a student. The hornpipe of the excellent *Allegro scherzando* which follows surely is a traditional sailors' dance if not a Norse folk melody. The finale, *Allegro assai con fuoco*, is truly a surprise. It opens with a wild and fiery Hungarian dance. To this is added a slower more lyrical second melody which does sound Nordic. Svendsen is able to fuse the two appealing themes quite successfully. Here is a fun quartet with good part-writing. Strong enough for the concert hall, it will find friends among amateurs.



Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937) was born in the village of Tymoszkówka, then in the Kiev Governorate of the Russian Empire. He studied music privately with his father before attending the Warsaw Conservatory of which he was later its director. He is generally considered the most important Polish composer of the early 20th century. His early style showed the influence of Wagner, Richard Strauss, Max Reger, and Alexander Scriabin. Somewhat later of Debussy Maurice Ravel. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op. 37 was composed in 1917. It is in three movements and was awarded a first prize by the Polish Ministry of Culture. The opening *Lento assai* introduction is a combination of post-Wagnerian and French-impressionist lyricism. The main section, *Allegro moderato* is tonally pungently and dramatic. There are rapid swings of mood and tempo. In the middle of the movement is an interesting and contrasting section marked *scherzando alla burlesca*. It is almost an independent episode. The middle movement, *Andantino semplice*, is slow and song like marked 'in modo d'una canzone.' The finale has wit and drive, as well as thematic resource, and is characterized by an almost boisterous energy. This finale, *Vivace, Scherzando alla burlesca. Vivace ma non troppo* reflects the fact that it was originally written as the scherzo of a four-movement work. Its polymodality is similar to Bartók. The movement is concise yet offers a succession of contrasting episodes of great rhythmic variety. An interesting and good work for concert, but only for advanced amateurs.

String Quartet No. 2 Op. 56 was written in 1927. It, too, is in three movements: *Moderato*, *Vivace scherzando* and *Lento*. The first movement begins *Moderato* in a style descended from Debussy with a faint murmuring in the three lower voices over which the first violin introduces the main theme in a soft whisper. The quietness creates a sense of tension which is released as the music moves towards several dramatic climaxes. The second movement, *Vivace, scherzando*, begins with double-stop chords on all the instruments creating an instant aura loud violence. There are similarities to Bartok again, from a rhythmic standpoint. The finale is marked *Lento*; *Moderato* begins calmly. The main body of the movement is a fugue that begins calmly, slowly, and elegantly. But as the movement progresses it gains both speed and passion building to a powerful coda. It, too, can be brought to concert. Those amateurs at home with the quartets of Bartok can also manage this one.



Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983) was born in Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, a suburb of Paris. As a girl, she studied piano with her mother and began composing on her own. She subsequently entered the Paris Conservatory where fellow students included Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, and Arthur Honegger. Her talent was recognized by her professors and she won sever-

al prizes for her compositions. Upon the premiere of her *String Quartet*, she was invited to join *Nouveaux Jeunes*, a group which later came to be known as *Les Six*.

Her **String Quartet** follows the form of a free sonatina in three movements. The first movement, *Modéré allegro*, in c sharp minor, has a certain wayward elegance built on two themes without development. It is linked up with the second movement, a kind of *Scherzo* of delicate tenderness—very Ravelian in character. The finale has a rough *salterello* rhythm, 6/16, full of polytonal writing. It is quite interesting. A solid work for an occasional concert outing. Requires experienced ensemble amateur players.



The name *Taneyev* (spelled, at least in English, many different ways—*Taneyev*, *Tanaiev*, *Taneieff*, *Taneyeff*, etc.—due to the difficulty of transliterating the Cyrillic alphabet) is not, outside of Russia, that well-known. Those who have heard of it invariably associate it with Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915), sometimes known as the "Russian Brahms" not because of any tonal resemblance but because of the intricateness of his compositions.

Alexander Taneyev (1850-1918) was a distant cousin and not, as is sometimes claimed, the uncle of Sergei. He inherited an enthusiasm for music from his parents, but as a member of the Russian upper class, was dissuaded from pursuing a career as a professional musician. After studying at university, he entered the Russian civil service, eventually succeeding his father as Director of the Imperial Chancellery. However, Taneyev also pursued musical studies both in Germany and later in Petersburg where he became a student of Rimsky Korsakov. It is easy to draw a parallel between the lives of Alexander Taneyev and Alexander Borodin both of whom pursued non-musical professional careers. However, whereas Borodin might easily slip away from his test tubes in the laboratory to a nearby room to note down some theme which suddenly occurred to him, Taneyev, as a bureaucrat, was unable to just get up and leave his desk. It was rumored, nonetheless, that he kept a score that he was working on hidden beneath official documents so that he might pen a few notes between appointments. Judging from his output—two operas, three symphonies, several pieces for orchestra, several choral works, and a considerable amount of chamber music—his appointment schedule could not have been too heavy. Taneyev wrote three *String Quartets* all of which it is thought were composed between 1898-1900.

The first movement, *Maestoso-Allegro* to **String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.25** begins with a short American Indian sounding introduction. This quickly gives way to a lovely Russian theme. The influence of Rimsky Korsakov—for those who are familiar with Borodin, Kopylov and some of Rimsky's other students—is quite evident. This very well put together movement is followed up by a short, but superb scherzo marked *Presto*. There is no trio but the energetic main theme is punctuated by two episodes of a slower more relaxed melody. Next is a very lyrical *Andante sostenuto* with some interesting chromaticism. The vigorous finale, *Allegro risoluto*, is clearly based on a Russian folk melody. This work presents no technical hurdles. It is without doubt a very fine quartet would be quite enjoyable for both amateurs and professionals alike. A good concert choice.

String Quartet, No.2 in C Major, Op.28 is in 5 movements. The opening *Moderato assai* does not sound like an opening movement at all but perhaps could have served as a second movement. Chromatic and gentle in feel, even in its somewhat faster middle section which features a small fugue. The second movement, *Intermezzo*, is immediately gripping with its pleading opening theme introduced by the violin and then taken up by the cello. The trio section features a clever *Valse melancolique* which in truth is nowhere near as sad as the main section. Next is a

slight Minuet *con moto*, an updated, chromatic and Russified version of the Viennese classic. A *Larghetto*, which begins as if it had been penned by Haydn, eventually develops into something more romantic in the middle section. Without any great passion, it is nonetheless a fetching movement. The finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, opens with an extraordinarily tumultuous introduction which gives way to the first theme, a fugue. Here and there, one hears some influence of late Beethoven. All and all an interesting work, tonally independent of Rimsky and even Russian influence. Good for concert and for home.

String Quartet No.3 in A Major, Op.30 in the traditional four movements, structurally resembles the First Quartet. The opening *Allegro comodo* features a gentle but lovely opening theme. Rimsky's influence can be heard but there is also a somewhat French sound as well. For the most part, the movement seems to wander aimlessly and the powerful conclusion is a bit of a surprise. Next is another short Scherzo, *Allegro molto*, a rapid elves dance with a very brief trio of darker tonality. A reflective *Larghetto* is elegiac in mood. The finale, *Allegro molto*, rhythmically vigorous, is perhaps the strongest and best of this work which, outside of the first movement, in no way sounds Russian. The weakest of three, but not really a weak work. Good for home, but I think not in the concert hall.



Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915) is one of the greatest Russian composers from the last half of the 19th and early 20th centuries and probably, from this group, the one whose music is the least known in the West. Taneyev came from an aristocratic family that patronized the arts and when Sergei's talent became apparent, his father sent him to the newly opened Moscow Conservatory at the age of 10. His main teachers there were Nicolai Rubinstein for piano and Tchaikovsky for composition. Although he became a brilliant pianist, Taneyev opted for a career as a composer and teacher and soon became a professor at the Conservatory. His fame both as a teacher and as a composer quickly spread. Among his many students were Gliere, Rachmaninov, Gretchaninov, Scriabin and Medtner. In Russian concert halls, one always finds a bust of Taneyev alongside those of Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Tchaikovsky. Sadly, the fame of this outstanding composer has not spread beyond his homeland. Influenced by Tchaikovsky, Taneyev preferred to write "pure" music rather than Russian-sounding or so-called "nationalistic" music based on Russian folk melodies. As such, he remained outside of the Nationalist School headed by Rimsky-Korsakov. His music sounds markedly different from that of Rimsky and his famous students such as Borodin and Glazunov. He wrote nine string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in b flat minor, Op.4 was published in 1892. After a short *Andante espressivo* introduction, which appears in a slightly altered form in the coda, the main section of the first movement, *Allegro*, begins. The principal theme is impressive but the second theme, given out by the viola, is even more so. The development is cleverly done. The second movement, *Largo*, has for its main theme a quiet, serious melody which as time goes on becomes quite expressive. A *Presto*, which is a scherzo, comes next with a highly effective main subject, particularly noteworthy for the fine accompaniment. An extra movement, a tonally rich *Intermezzo*, is placed before the finale. There is much careful ornamentation, including *cadenza* for both the first violin and viola. A playful *Vivace e giocoso* closes out the work. It is the brightest of the five movements. Good for concert performance as well as the music stands of amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major, Op.5 dates from 1896. The first movement, *Allegro*, with its powerful main theme is beautiful but the lyrical second theme even more so. Both are appealing

and clothed in gorgeous instrumental writing. As for the use of rhythm, Taneyev must be given the laurel wreath, especially in the spirited and haunting second movement, Scherzo. The lovely, slower trio section, with its solos for cello and viola, is particularly attractive. This is followed by a richly beautiful *Adagio espressivo* which is highly atmospheric. Of particular beauty is the second theme. The bright, untroubled finale, *Allegro vigorosamente*, is jovial and fetching with broad and powerful coda is a wonderful fugue based on the main theme. This great quartet is a masterpiece belonging to the repertoire. It can also be recommended to amateurs without reservation.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.7 was dedicated to Rachmaninov. It is unusual for two reasons. First, it is only in two movements, and second, the final movement consists of a theme and set of eight variations and a coda, originally composed what became *String Quartet No.3* in 1886. In its revised version it was published around 1899. The opening movement, *Allegro*, is in the minor and begins in a subdued somewhat sad fashion with a theme dominated by its rhythm. The development is highly dramatic, almost violent in its power. The huge second movement, is of considerable length. It begins with a naive, pastoral theme in the major. In the eight variations that follow, Taneyev explores various moods, tempi and unusual effects. Most of the variations remain in the major, but only toward the end does he return to the darker minor. This was Taneyev's most popular quartet in his own lifetime and it still receives performances in Russia. A fine work which can be recommended for concert and to amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in a minor, Op.11 was published in 1900 and dedicated to the famous Bohemian String Quartet. As a tip of the hat to them, the *Adagio* introduction to the first movement bears a striking resemblance to Czech folk melody. The main section, *Allegro*, has for its main theme a very simple, but very effective melody. The coda is especially rich. The second movement, *Allegretto vivace e scherzando*, is, as the title suggests, a scherzo. Here the writing demonstrates Taneyev's tremendous command of technique. The *Adagio* which follows gives off an aura of a spiritual peacefulness. The finale, *Adagio-Presto*, begins with a slow introduction similar to that of the quartet's opening bars. It leads to the main part of the movement which reaches a fevered pitch of excitement and emotion. In speaking of this work, two words come to mind: "Massive" and "Masterpiece." As such it should be in the concert repertoire and can be warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.5 in A Major, Op.13 appeared in 1903 is written on a smaller scale than all but the Third and in some ways harks back to the classical era in its thematic simplicity. The main subject of the first movement, *Allegro con spirito*, shows the composer's fondness for syncopation, while the second theme has a definite Haydnesque quality to it. The second movement, *Adagio espressivo*, has a Beethovenian quality both in its invention and mood and same could also be said of the *Allegro molto* which serves as a scherzo. A trio section is brighter in mood. The finale, a *Presto*, is upbeat and exciting. It is a solid work but it cannot compare to Nos. 2, 3 and 4. The outer movements though good are less compelling. I would not recommend it for concert but as it is still a solid work and not as difficult to put together most of his others, it can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.6 in B flat Major, Op.19 dates from 1905. The themes of the first movement, *Allegro giusto*, are very plastic and quite lyrical. The sorrowful *Adagio serioso* which follows is full of elevated sentiment. A scherzo, marked *Gigue*, is fresh and has a lovely singing section as well. The finale begins *Allegro moderato*, but is shortly interrupted by a fiery *Presto*. In fact, the entire movement is filled with interruptions as one new theme follows interrupts another. This is another fine work, though short of masterwork status, it is still a good choice for concert and experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.7 in E flat Major is the first of three string quartets he composed between 1880 and 1885 and before he wrote his String Quartet No.1. These three quartets, though quite accomplished, were never published during his lifetime. A score was published as part of a book of his unpublished works in 1952. Parts were made by a copyist from the score and circulated but neither the parts nor the score were ever commercially published until recently. The genial opening movement, though marked Allegro, is more moderato than allegro, with its very romantic themes, showing the influence of his teacher Tchaikovsky. The emotional center of gravity can be found in the massive slow movement, Andante espressivo. Mostly calm and introspective, the movement is not without passionate outbursts of emotion. The third movement is an explosive Scherzo, presto, enclosed both in the beginning and the end by a poignant Andante. The finale, Presto, bustles along, dominated more by its rhythms than the melodic material. This is a solid work, certainly to be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.8 in C Major is the second of three string quartets he composed between 1880 and 1885 and before he wrote his String Quartet No.1, Op.4. The opening Allegro con brio begins with a series of loud introductory chords followed by the main theme which is at the same time both elegant, energetic and full of forward drive. The second movement, Adagio ma non troppo, is deep and somber but not without several dramatic climaxes. Next comes a modern Mozartean Tempo di Minuetto. Taneyev's take on what his idol might have written had he been alive and abreast of developments in 1883. The finale, Allegro molto, is an exciting romp from start to finish. If not a masterpiece, it is certainly very close to being one and it is hard to understand why Taneyev did not choose to have it published. An excellent concert choice and also for experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.9 in A Major is the third of three string quartets he composed between 1880 and 1885 and before he wrote his String Quartet No.1. The opening Allegro moderato is sunny and slightly Russian sounding. Tchaikovsky, whom Taneyev asked to review his manuscript, wrote on it that the movement was very elegant. The second movement, Andante, is quite lyrical and song like. Tchaikovsky especially liked the lively Russian-sounding third movement, marked Scherzo, Allegro con fuoco. The trio section is calmer and provides an excellent contrast. The Finale, Allegro giocoso, is a modern version of a rondo characterized by its rhythmically interesting main subject. This is another solid work. It could withstand the occasional concert airing and can certainly be recommended to amateurs.



Ernst Edward Taubert (1838-1934) was born in the German town of Regenwalde. He studied composition with Albrecht Dietrich in Bonn and Friedrich Kiel in Berlin. He pursued a career as a teacher, music critic and composer. Taubert wrote five string quartets. The first three—No. 1 in D Major, Op.32 Nos.1 & 2 and No.3 in e minor, Op.34 have more or less disappeared and perhaps exist in libraries somewhere.

String Quartet No.4 in f sharp minor, Op.56 dates from 1898. The main march-like theme to the opening Allegro is introduced by immediately and makes a strong impression. The second subject is fugal. Next is a fleet scherzo, Vivace, the main section to which is also a fugue. The spirit of Mozart hovers over the third movement, Andante sostenuto. The finale, Presto, begins with a unison Hungarian sounding, march-like prelude. An attractive and more lyrical second subject provides a nice contrast. Recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.5 in d minor, Op.63 came out in 1902. The opening movement, Energetisch, nicht allzu schnell, sports some very appealing melodic material. It is followed by a deeply felt Larghetto cantabile. It is the lovely, singing trio section of the

Scherzo vivace which stands out more than the scherzo itself, which is somewhat dry. The finale, though not so marked, is a kind of fantasia, going through several different moods, starting with a Lento, which is then followed by a theme, Andante, and series of variations. Then the tempo picks up as an Allegretto and increases to the close. Another one for amateurs.



Chamber music is hardly the genre with which one ordinarily associates the name **Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky**. (1840-1893) Yet, like most of the 19th Century's important composers, he made contributions to the chamber music repertory that are not only substantial but also highly distinctive. And while he is without doubt best known nowadays for his symphonies and orchestral works, his chamber works

were held in high regard both inside of Russia and abroad. In fact, they were more responsible for establishing his reputation in Western Europe than were his concertos, tone poems and symphonies which on first hearing were frequently assailed by conservative critics as being "barbaric" and unduly daring. Today, Tchaikovsky's chamber music is rarely featured in concert, and if per chance a work is scheduled, invariably, it is the First Quartet with its Andante cantabile, which has become known to the public through its numerous transcriptions. Ironically, even the First Quartet remains largely unknown to the concert-going public. Upon hearing his chamber music, the listener is immediately struck by two things. One is the assured craftsmanship which, right from the first, marks his works. The other is the revelation of the affinity for string instruments, an affinity rare among composers who were principally pianists. And finally, there is the inexhaustible flood of musical ideas and of memorable melodies. Upon hearing Tchaikovsky's "First" String Quartet, the unexpected assurance and deft skillfulness of this so-called First Quartet can be explained by the fact that it was not really his first at all. Tchaikovsky had been sent by his father to study law at the Imperial School of Jurisprudence in St. Petersburg. After graduating, he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory where, from 1862-1865, he studied composition with the Conservatory's founder and director, Anton Rubinstein.

It was during this time, he had tried his hand at several chamber works including the **String Quartet in B flat, Op. Post.** composed in 1865. This work, which features the imaginative use of Ukrainian folk melodies, remained unpublished until well into the 20th century. The Quartet is in one movement and two theories have been advanced as to why that may have been. The first theory postulates that it was intended as the first movement of a string quartet which the composer never completed. The argument which best supports this theory is that there are few if any instances of one movement string quartets which might have served as an example for the composer. The second theory postulates that it could not have been intended as only the first movement as each part is 10 pages in length. Had it only been the first movement of a projected work, that work would have been of mammoth proportions. It may well have been that as the movement took shape, Tchaikovsky realized that it could not be more than one movement because of its length. It might also be argued that it is not simply in one movement but three movements or, if one movement, a movement with three distinct sections. It opens Adagio misterioso. The music is quiet and tonally dark, partially recalling the music of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the end of the section, each instrument is given a cadenza, the last of which heralds in the main section, Allegro con moto. It has a lovely main theme, Russian in character. The second subject is more lyrical, The development of these themes is painstaking and involves several different treatments, including a fugue. Slowly, the music becomes calmer. Finally, the introductory section reappears and brings the work to a close.

The occasion, in 1871, which led Tchaikovsky to compose **String Quartet No.1 in D Major, Op.11** was the proposal of an all-Tchaikovsky concert by Nikolai Rubinstein, brother of the famous Anton, head of the Moscow Conservatory and the most important and influential musical personage then in Moscow.. By contrast, Tchaikovsky was a meagerly paid professor in his fifth year at the Conservatory, and was by no means well-known either in Russia or abroad. To the contrary, he was a virtual unknown in a culturally backward country which had, until then, counted for little on the European musical scene. To make matters worse, though Moscow was the larger city, it was a very small "second fiddle" to the Russian imperial and musical capital, St. Petersburg. Hence, Tchaikovsky recognized that such a concert would bring him to the attention of the general musical public, at least in Moscow, and, perhaps equally as important, if well attended, would supplement his negligible professor's salary. His economic distress made it impossible for him to engage an orchestra which ruled out any orchestral works and the necessity for programmatic variety meant that he had to put on something more than just piano solos, or violin and piano sonatas. The offer by his friend Ferdinand Laub, first violinist of the Russian Musical Society Quartet, to play without fee made writing a quartet for the concert an obvious choice. If the newspaper reviews are to be believed, the concert apparently was a success as critics and audience alike seemed to have been favorably impressed by all of the music, The First Quartet received high praise and in particular the lovely second movement *Andante cantabile*. Interestingly, four years later in 1875 when Tchaikovsky's publisher Jurgenson went to bring out a new edition of the quartet, it was discovered that only eleven copies of the first edition had been sold in Russia; all the other copies had been sold abroad. The first movement is marked *Moderato e semplice*, yet it is anything but simple rhythmically. It begins in 9/8 time, the syncopated rhythm being more striking than the unexceptional melody. The second theme, played by the viola, is more convincing but is more complicated rhythmically adding a 12/8 bar in the third measure of the theme. Near the movement's end, the players are instructed to pick up the tempo gradually and to "play with fire" which gives an exciting flourish to the ending. The second movement, *Andante Cantabile*, is certainly one of the most famous pieces Tchaikovsky ever wrote. The introductory melody is itself quite poignant but second theme became an "international hit" and has become known through various transcriptions to millions the world over, few of whom ever heard it performed in its original scoring. Tolstoy, however, was one of those who did and is said to have been reduced to tears afterwards. The movement is based on a folksong which Tchaikovsky said he had heard from a carpenter. The words to this marvelous melody, however, are somewhat less than enthralling: "*Vanya sat on the couch and smoked his pipe*" or, according to other translators, sat drinking vodka. The melody, as Tchaikovsky set it, begins quietly with muted strings. He makes no attempt to develop the subject or even to create much of a contrast when he introduces the famous theme of the midsection which is sung by the first violin to the cello's seemingly interminable pizzicato accompaniment. After repetition of the opening theme, the whole thing slowly dies away. The scherzo, *Allegro non tanto e con fuoco*, dispels the dreamlike mood with rhythmic drive and syncopation, which show the influence of Schumann, especially the scherzo of the latter's piano quintet, Opus 44. The finale, *Allegro giusto*, opens with a simple but sprightly theme of great energy. The second theme, introduced by the viola, is Russian in character, slower and more noble. It reappears several times, often stated by the cello, each occasion seemingly more beautiful than the last. As the movement comes to a close, there is a fast and brilliant finish where fragments of the main theme are whirled madly about.

Although the First Quartet has always eclipsed his two later quartets, thanks in no small part to the famous *Andante cantabile*,

these, too, were also widely performed and admired and did much to establish Tchaikovsky's reputation as a composer of major stature, especially outside of Russia.. Tchaikovsky considered his **String Quartet No.2 in F Major, Op.22** one of his best works and was particularly fond of it, remembering how easy it had been to write, "*...not a single one of my works poured out of me so easily and simply. I wrote it practically at one sitting.*" This was in the winter of 1874. The first movement, pervaded throughout by a dark mood, opens with a reverie, *Adagio*, a poetically charming cadenza for the first violin. The *Moderato* that follows features a very Russian melody. The second theme is characterized by a march-like syncopation while the development section has a clever canon between the cello and the first violin. The movement ends with a dreamy first violin solo which is, in reality, a slightly altered form of the opening melody found in the *Adagio*. The scherzo, *Allegro giusto*, which follows lopes along in what is actually 7/4 time, a tempo frequently found in Russian folk dances. However, to accomplish this effect, Tchaikovsky first writes two bars of 6/8 followed by one of 9/8. The trio section is to be played at the same tempo as the scherzo. It is a waltz of great beauty in standard 3/4 time but made particularly effective by the placement of the accent on the second beat. The scherzo is then repeated galloping furiously to its energetic and thundering finish, *con fuoco*. The third movement, *Andante ma non tanto*, is one of the most exquisite of its kind written for quartet. A piece of autumnal feeling, it is simple in conception with very little working out. The distinctive use of dynamics which rise to an orchestra triple forte in the development section to an hushed triple piano with which the movement closes are perhaps the most memorable effect he achieves in it. The finale, *Allegro con moto*, begins with a short high spirited four measure introduction in unison which gives way to the first theme whose repeated eighth-two sixteenth note rhythm dominates it more than the melody. It is followed by one of those many memorable Tchaikovsky melodies. Two fugal interludes follow and then lead to the triumphant and flying coda which bring the quartet to a close.

Ferdinand Laub, was a Austrian-born violin virtuoso who traveled widely, winding up in 1866 as chief violin professor at the Moscow Conservatory, where he became a friend as well as colleague of Tchaikovsky and was the leader of the string quartet that gave the premieres of the composer's first two works in this medium. His death in March of 1875 was almost the last straw on the burden of depression under which Tchaikovsky was laboring at the time—much of it the result of his friend Nicholas Rubinstein's devastating criticism, a couple of months earlier, of the First Piano Concerto in its original version. The notion of composing an elegiac tribute to Laub probably occurred immediately, but it wasn't until nearly a year later that Tchaikovsky began work on it during a stay in Paris. Back in Moscow, he completed his **String Quartet No.3 in e flat minor, Op.30**, dedicated to the memory of Ferdinand Laub, in 1876. It begins with a slow introduction, *Andante sostenuto*. The main theme, marked *Allegro moderato*, is distinctive more for its rhythmic complexity than for its melodic interest. A delicate second theme is more lyrical. The development is elaborate and the recapitulation is unusual because it introduces an entirely new *cantabile* theme, heard first in the cello and then in the first violin part. The coda is a return to the *Andante sostenuto* introduction. The second movement, *Allegro vivo e scherzando*, contrasts with the others but it cannot be said to be gay, rather it is more in the nature of an airy and gracious intermezzo. The short and somewhat slower trio section provides an excellent contrast The third movement, *Andante funebre a doloroso ma con moto*, is the one that most explicitly commemorates Laub. The first subject is for muted strings, with a sobbing motif in block chords. Against this accompaniment, the first violin brings forth a contrasting and declamatory melody. This is followed by an eloquently elegiac second subject, *pian-gendo a molto espressivo*. After so emotional a movement, the

extraverted energy of the finale provides a great contrast of mood. It is marked *Allegro non troppo a risoluto* and both its main themes are strongly accented. This energetic music only flags momentarily during a few measures marked *Quasi Andante*, which precede a bravura and a whirlwind ending.



Nikolai Tchérépnine (1873-1945) was born in St. Petersburg. He took a law degree at the university there before entering the Conservatory where he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov. By 1909, he was a was teaching there and held the position of professor. Among his many students was Sergei Prokofiev. He also became a well-known conductor and served as Diaghliev's conductor of his Ballet Russes in Paris. After the Russian

Revolution, he moved to Paris where he worked as a conductor.

His **String Quartet No. in a minor, Op.11** was completed in 1902. The first movement begins with a substantial Moderato introduction which builds expectation and tension. It leads to the main section *Un poco mosso*, which begins with a dialogue between the cello and first violin over a pulsing accompaniment. Full of forward motion it is exciting. The big second movement, *Scherzo, allegro molto* is quite energetic and leads to an interesting and nicely contrasting *Intermezzo* which serves as the trio section. Next is a warm and lyrical *Adagio*. The work concludes with a pounding *Allegro molto*. This was really quite a good work until the finale in which there is interminable repetition of a numbing rhythmic scale-like pounding in the viola and cello. It is almost without melodic material. So unpleasant is it that one does not even wish to get to the second theme. A pity really.

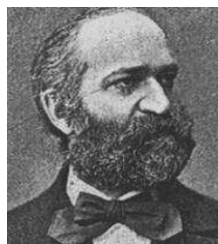


Richard Thiele (1847-1903) was born in Berlin. His initial music lessons were from his father Siegfried a composer and organist. Subsequent studies were in Berlin and Leipzig. He made his career as a theater director and composer. Between 1880 and 1900 his comic operettas were amongst the most popular in the German-speaking world. He is generally recognized as

the greatest composer of Bieroper (beer operas), a kind of comic opera performed in operetta theaters and German student associations. Several are still frequently performed, including Rinaldo Rinaldini, *Tannhäuser in Purgatory* a parody of Wagner's opera which features 22 student and popular folksongs. Perhaps his most famous work is the march *Stolz weht die Flagge Schwarz-Weiss-Rot* (The black, white and red flag waved proudly) which comes his *Singspiel Unser Marine* (Our Navy). It is one of the most famous marches ever written and regularly performed by military bands all over the world from Japan, to Europe to America. Thiele was also one of the most assiduous collectors of German comic *Volkslieder* (folksongs), which he not only used in his operettas but also in his three string quartets in the comic style. These are classically conceived and finely written works.

In my opinion, the best of these is his **Comic String Quartet No.2, Op.39** which was composed in 1881. The first movement, *Andantino*, is a theme and three variations based on the folksong *Eduard and Kunigunde*. Eduard brings his beloved Kunigunde the sad news that he has lost all his money and has not a penny to his name. Melodramatically, Eduard tells Kunigunde he must take leave of her and this life rather than living a life of poverty. She agrees to join him. It is not a sad tale but one of two foolish people who need not have taken this action. The second movement, *Marcia funebre*, is based on the folksong *Lott ist todt* (Lott is dead). It is a popular jolly but macabre folksong which is danced to a lively polka. It is sung by children who very happy, the first verse goes *Lott is dead this is good, Julie is dying, this is good, we will get something to inherit*. Thiele turns it into a bi-

zarre funeral march. The third movement is a very short *Menuet* based on the theme *Wenn der Topf aber nun ein Loch hat* (what if the pot has a hole in it) This popular folksong begins *What if the pot has a hole dear Heinrich / Then plug it up dear Liese / But how shall I plug dear Heinrich / With straw dear Liese with straw and so forth*. Though short, it is to be played 6 times starting *pp*, then *mp*, then *mf*, then *ff*, then *mf*, finally *pp*. This is to create the effect of strolling musicians approaching from a distance, then coming very close and then departing into the distance. The finale is a lively *Allegro* based on the folksong *Wenn der Hund mit der Wurst* (When the dog has the sausage) This is a nonsense folksong which begins *When the dog jumps over the spittoon with the sausage / And the stork in the air devours the frog*. If you are not beyond enjoying a superbly written work based on humorous German folksongs, you can do no better than this fine quartet. Fun to play, and surprisingly effective in the concert hall.



Ferdinand Thieriot (1838-1919), five years younger than Brahms, was not only born in Hamburg, but also studied with the same teacher, Eduard Marxein. The two knew each other from their Hamburg days and remained on friendly terms. After Hamburg, Thieriot finished his studies in Munich with Joseph Rheinberger and then moved to Vienna where his friend Brahms was instru-

mental in helping him obtain the position of Styrian Music Director in the provincial capital of Graz where he worked between 1870-85. Later, Thieriot held important positions in Leipzig and Hamburg where he remained from 1902 until his death. For the most part, Thieriot remained true to the classical traditions which preceded him and took Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Schumann as his models. Only toward the end of his life did he his work show some of the influence of the "New German Music" of Wagner and Liszt. Thieriot wrote a great deal of chamber music, most of it of very high quality. Wilhelm Altmann, one of the most influential and perceptive chamber music critics of all time, writing of Thieriot's chamber music, states: "Thieriot's chamber music is without exception noble and pure. He writes with perfect command of form and expression." This was written nearly 20 years after Thieriot's death. During his lifetime, critics uniformly praised his chamber music works for their high quality, for his gift of melody and the effectiveness of his writing. And yet, all of this praise turned out to be ephemeral as his music quickly disappeared from the concert stage and his fine music was unjustly forgotten along with that of so many other fine composers from the Romantic era. Only two of Ferdinand Thieriot's string quartets were ever published during his lifetime. He wrote at least 12 string quartets. When he retired in 1902 and moved back to Hamburg, he took all of his unpublished manuscripts with him. And shortly before his death, he made arrangements for them to be deposited in what is now known as the library of the Staats-und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky. (The University Library of Hamburg known as the SUB).

After obtaining a copy of the manuscript to his **String Quartet in g minor, Op. Post** from the Library, Edition Silvertrust published it in 2022..It probably dates from 1867 when Thieriot was working as a music teacher in Leipzig. This surmise is based in part on the fact that Thieriot wrote Leipzig at the end of the manuscript score. It is true that he was also working in Leipzig some 30 years later in 1897, but judging from the style, it more closely resembles works from the earlier date. In four movements, the lyrical first movement *Allegro moderato*, has a rather heavy, somewhat melancholy main theme. A second subject is brighter. The second movement, *Adagio*, presents a simple, almost naive, folk melody. This is interrupted by a dramatic, turbulent interlude before calm returns. A playful, upbeat *Intermezzo, poco allegro* comes next. The finale, *Vivace*, is a syncopated exotic dance-like

rondo. This quartet can be warmly recommended to amateurs as it presents no technical difficulties, and has good part-writing.

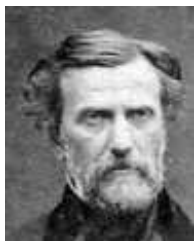
String Quartet No.2 in C Major, Op.93 was completed in 1911 and published the following year. Though it was given the number 2, it was one of the last, if not the last, of the thirteen string quartets he wrote. The only one ever receiving publication during his lifetime. In four movements, the first is simply marked *Tempo moderato*. The music is genial and relaxed and though the quartet bears the dedication "To the memory of Joseph Haydn" there is nothing which brings that composer to mind. Rather, the tonality recalls Schumann and Mendelssohn. The second movement is marked *Tempo di Menuett*. Charming and certainly a bit old fashioned for 1911. The third movement, *Choral-Adagio*, is somber and reflective as the title suggests. The bright and lively finale, *Allegro non tanto*, sports a main theme with an off-beat, syncopated rhythm. Good for amateurs, not for concert.



Louis Thirion (1879-1966) was born in the French town of Baccarat. He studied violin, and organ as well as composition, the later with the French composer Guy Ropartz at the Conservatory of Nancy. At the age of 20, he was appointed professor of piano and organ there, eventually becoming its director in 1918. Besides Ropartz, he was influenced by Cesar Franck, Debussy,

Chabrier and Stravinsky. Most of his works were composed between 1900 and 1913. This was in part due to the fact that he was on active duty in the French army from 1914 to 1918 and not long after, his wife died leaving him with two small children to raise. He made the decision then to stop composing and concentrated on performance and wrote one string quartet.

His **String Quartet in E Major, Op.10** was dedicated to his fellow composer Florent Schmitt. It dates from 1908. In four movements, it opens with a leisurely *Très modéré*. Gently flowing, it has the heavy fragrance of Ravel and Debussy. The second movement, *Assez vif*, is full of nervous energy, but very, very repetitious. Repetition is no substitute of ideas. This is followed by a languid, melancholy *Adagio*. The finale, *Très animé et véhément*, is by turns thrusting and full of frenetic motion but also lyricism. The thematic material is neither strong enough to justify concert performance or the time of amateurs.



Today, **Ambroise Thomas** (1811-1896) is only remembered as the composer of the opera *Mignon*, one of the most successful French operas written during the last half of the 19 century. He was born in the French city of Metz where his parents were music teachers. They prepared him to become a musician and by age 10 he was already an excellent pianist and violinist. In 1828, he entered the Paris

Conservatory while at the same time continuing his piano studies privately with the famous virtuoso pianist Kalkbrenner. In 1832, he won the Conservatory's prestigious composition prize, the *Prix de Rome*, which allowed him to travel to and study in that city for a year. He took with him a love for Mozart and Beethoven but once in Rome became an ardent admirer of the Italian cantilena and melodic tradition. It was during his Italian sojourn that he wrote all of his chamber music, including a string quartet.

The **String Quartet in e minor, Op.1**, though numbered as his opus 1, was by no means his first work. To begin with, the *Prix de Rome* was a composition prize and Thomas had won it based on his composition of a cantata. He had written quite a number of other works even before entering the Conservatory. The quartet was his first work, after his student days, in his opinion worthy of an opus number. This light but brilliantly written quartet, dating from 1833, shows how well Thomas had assimilated the musical language of the Italian vocal and operatic style

and one can clearly hear the influence of Rossini and Paganini, two of its leading advocates at that time. In the first movement, *Allegro moderato*, the lovely but brooding main theme is first presented as a duet between the cello and first violin but then all of the voices join in its development. Short stormy episodes periodically punctuate longer, cantabile sections. The second movement is marked *Menuetto*, but the music, characterized by fast descending and then ascending passages, is closer in feel to a scherzo than a minuet. The lovely trio section is a waltz in which the viola and then the cello are given long singing passages. Verdi, who knew Thomas' music well, must surely have borrowed this idea for his own quartet as the trio section to his quartet so closely resembles what Thomas did here. The third movement, *Andante*, is clearly written in an operatic fashion. Each voice shares the beautiful theme in short responses. In hearing the thematic material of the toe-tapping finale, *Allegro vivace--Allegretto*, one might well guess the composer was Paganini. Here, brilliance comes to the forefront and especially in the exciting conclusion. There is very little like this quartet in the literature and of its kind, it is clearly first rate. Enjoyable for amateurs but certainly strong enough concert.



Randall Thompson (1899-1984) was born in New York City and studied music at Harvard and the Eastman Conservatory. After graduating, he studied with Gian Francesco Malipiero in Italy before returning to the States. He taught at Harvard, Virginia and the Curtis Institute. Among his many students was Leonard Bernstein. He wrote in most genres but was best known for his choral works.

Thompson's **String Quartet No.1 in d minor** dates from 1941 and was the result of a commission from Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, perhaps the most important sponsor of chamber music compositions in the first half of the 20th century. Thompson commented that Beethoven's *Rasumovsky Quartets* served as his model, though not, of course, tonally. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins with an urgent, driving rhythmic theme. One can hear a bit of American fiddle tunes. A more lyrical second theme provides fine contrast. The broad second movement, *Lento e tristo*, begins with the cello present a heart-felt melody. Then comes a scherzo, *Vivace ma non troppo*, in which Thompson employs several meters, changes of dynamics and articulation to achieve a 20th century, very American sounding, version of what Beethoven managed in his Op.59 No.1 scherzo. A *meno mosso* section interrupts the scherzo twice. The finale, *Allegro appassionato*, begins with a downward moving, organ-like introduction, before the lyrical main subject makes its appearance. It is a passionate theme, full of pathos but the quartet finds its way to a peaceful resolution as it ends. This is a very fine work which would do well in concert. As it presents no technical hurdles, it can also be heartily recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in G Major was composed to commemorate the 130th anniversary of the Harvard Musical Association in 1967. As such, it is a celebratory work. The lively opening movement, *Prelude, Allegro vivace*, is full of running passages in all the voices. The second movement, *Air and Variations*, is a very modern take on the old Baroque standby. Next comes a lyrical *Adagio*, using American folk melody. The finale, *Allegro con brio*, is full of forward drive, making for a fitting conclusion. Another good choice for concert and amateurs.

Virgil Thomson (1896-1989) was born in Kansas City, Missouri. There he studied organ. He attended Harvard University. In Paris, he studied with Nadia Boulanger. He is often credited, along with Aaron Copeland, with having pioneered the so-called American sound. He composed two string quartets, both in 1931, while he was in Paris..



String Quartet No.1 opens with an Allegro moderato. It is not exactly easy to follow the thematic material as the music wanders about, though not entirely uninteresting. The Adagio which follows makes much more sense. It is mostly lyrical with just a touch of dissonance here and there. Overall, the mood is melancholy but it is not exactly memorable. Next is a Tempo di Valzer. It is, as the movement title suggests, a waltz. It starts off in a promising manner but sort of deteriorates as things progress. The finale begins with a Lento which goes on for rather too long but eventually leads to a Presto. The Lento recalls the second movement. One does not get the impression much is happening or is going happen. Rather like in a movie theater when one decides in the middle of the picture that it is a better use of time to leave than to stay. However, if one stays, one gets to hear the Presto which is rather good and a big improvement on the Lento. Still, all things considered, this is not a work I would bring into the concert hall, nor do I think amateurs will enjoy it.

String Quartet No.2 is in two movements and another matter altogether. For a start, it is much easier to follow the thematic material. The first movement, Allegro moderato, is upbeat, in parts march-like, with short bursts of tremolo adding to the excitement. It holds the listener's attention and is quite appealing. The finale, Tempo di Valzer is a lovely, American sounding, waltz. This quartet deserves concert performances and can be warmly recommended to amateurs.



Ludwig Thuille (1861-1907) was born in the then Austrian town of Bozen located in the South Tirol (now in Italy and called Bolzano). His remarkable talent for music was recognized at an early age. After a stint at the Innsbruck School of Music, Thuille studied with Josef Rheinberger at the Bavarian Royal Conservatory in Munich. Thuille befriended Richard Strauss when he was ten and they remained

friends for the rest of Thuille's life. Strauss' influence on Thuille's music was certainly as great as that of Rheinberger. The last part of his life, Thuille spent as a music professor and composer, achieving considerable fame for his operas. He was the founder of the so-called New Munich School of composition. Among his many students was Ernest Bloch. Thuille wrote in most genres and wrote two string quartets, both are early works.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major was completed in 1878 while he was a student at the Innsbruck Conservatory. It was dedicated to his friend Richard Strauss. The bright and genial opening movement, Allegro moderato, is interesting, very well-written with appealing melodies. The second movement, Adagio molto, is somewhat funereal. It has great dignity and noble melody. Next is a lively, playful Scherzo. The bustling finale, Quasi presto, is jovial though not quiet up to the other movements. Quite a good work for a seventeen year old. Recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in G Major was written over a two year period and completed in 1881. It is only in three movements ending in an andante and the general consensus, given that fact, is that Thuille never completed it. The opening movement, Allegro, is pleasant but unremarkable. Next is a Moderato which is a kind of cross between an updated minuet and an intermezzo, bright and pleasant. The last movement, Andante, is song-like and lyrical. It can be recommended to amateurs.

Born in Martinkov, Moravia now part of the Czech Republic but then part of Habsburg Austria **Otto Tichy** (1890-1973) studied composition at the Prague Conservatory with Vitzoslav Novak and then continued his studies in Paris at the Schola Cantorum with Vincent d'Indy. Between 1926-36, he taught in Switzerland and then returned to Prague eventually becoming a professor at



the Conservatory. Mostly known for his religious music, he, composed two works for string quartet.

String Quartet No.1 in e flat minor was written in 1924 in Paris. It reveals the influence of his teacher, d'Indy but also has vague folkloric elements. The overall feel is a fusion of French impressionism with late German romanticism. The opening movement, Moderato, vivo ma non tanto, begins in very dramatic fashion. The tonalities, for the most part, are very conservative for the time, more late 19th century than early 20th and certainly not as advanced as d'Indy's later quartets. The charming second movement, Allegretto, in the main is a gentle intermezzo. But here one can hear Novak's influence and Tichy's Czech background. This can be heard again in the short Andante which follows. The playful finale, Rondo allegro scherzando, again sounds more Central European than French although there are a few tonal passages in which d'Indy could have heard his influence upon the composer. While there is nothing groundbreaking about the quartet, it nonetheless is well-written and quite appealing. Acceptable for concert performance and recommended to amateurs.

Quartetino on Popular Moravian Folksongs, written in Prague in 1963. The four movements of the Quartetino—a bright Allegretto, a sweet Lento, a jovial Allegro scherzando and a bustling Allegro ma non troppo—are quite short. The folk songs are clearly discernible and are very effectively set against pleasant accompaniments. Tichy clearly had no use for serialism or atonality and was not even attracted to trying to stretch the limits of tonality as several other tonal composers such as Bohuslav Martinu or Karl Weigl had, to name but two. In fact, his own teachers were tonally more adventurous than he. While I would not say that his music is reactionary, because there are clearly definable elements of modernity to found, they are so tastefully handled that they do not sound as such. Clearly, Tichy's elementary conservatism must have resulted in the marginalization of his works which are very pleasing to hear and to play. Also recommended to amateur groups.



Anton Ferdinand Tietz (1742-1810 the name is variously spelled Titz, Ditz, Dietz) was born in the German city of Nuremberg. He studied the violin, reaching a very high degree of proficiency. Not much is known about his early life other than the fact that he moved to Vienna where he met Gluck whom he befriended. Thanks to Gluck, Tietz was engaged as a violinist in the

court orchestra and became a regular performer at Prince Lobkowitz's soirees. It was at one of these that the Russian diplomat Pyotr Soymonov heard him play and invited him to St. Petersburg, to which Tietz traveled in 1771. Once there, he became a chamber musician for Catharine the Great and was concertmaster of the Imperial Orchestra. In addition to his service in the orchestra, Tietz also taught the violin to Catherine's grandson and successor Grand Duke Alexander. Tietz doubtlessly had a talent for teaching; at any rate in the case of the grand duke, he was able to turn his student into a capable violinist good enough to play in the Imperial Orchestra. Tietz did not become a soloist due to stage fright. However, as a leader of the Imperial String Quartet, an ensemble which he himself introduced to Catherine, he was in his element. His leadership was such that he was able to stimulate considerable interest in chamber music not only at court but among the Russian aristocracy. Spohr, while touring St. Petersburg in 1802-1803 met Tietz. In his memoirs he wrote "*Tietz is not a great violinist and even less so the best of all times, as his admirers would have us believe, but he is without a doubt a musi-*

cal genius, as his compositions abundantly prove." Tietz was 60 when Spohr met him and few violinists are at the top of their game at that age. Tietz died in St. Petersburg in 1810. Most of his compositions consist of chamber music, of which only his string quartets were ever published. He wrote 12 string quartets of which I have heard eight and performed one.

A set of Six Quartets, composed in 1781 and published that year in Vienna, were dedicated to Prince Golitzin, the Russian ambassador to Vienna from 1761 to 1792 and one of Mozart's patrons. A set of Three Quartets was published in 1802 and another set was published in 1808. The 1802 Quartets are dedicated to his former student, the newly crowned Tsar Alexander I.

The **Six Quartets of 1781** were influenced by early Viennese classicism. Two of these already exhibit four movements, with one brisk movement at both the beginning and end, a minuet with a trio followed by a slow movement, all characteristic of later classicism. Tietz wrote them for his string quartet at the Imperial Court in Petersburg. They are the first to be composed in Russia, albeit by a German.

In the **Three Quartets of 1802**, Tietz varied the sequence of movements, while remaining within the framework of the classical form. What is quite striking about these quartets is the equality of part writing, in particular the cello which is given many solos and opportunities to present the thematic material.

String Quartet No.7 in G Major is the first of the set of 3 which appeared in 1802 and is the most ambitious of the set. The writing is quite interesting as it combines concertante style with the more updated polyphonic approach of Haydn and Mozart. The music is clearly in the Vienna Classical Style, resembling that of Franz Krommer, the Wranitzky brothers and Haydn rather than that of Mozart. Each instrument is given generous solos, in this respect, the cello is especially well served. Even Mozart's so-called cello quartets (K.575, 589 & 590) do not allow the cello to lead to such an extent. The work opens with a short and gentle Adagio introduction. It leads to a rousing Allegro which opens with a lengthy cello solo which briefly quotes Mozart's G Major Violin Concerto, K.216. The music sails along effortlessly with rushing passages interspersed with more singing episodes. In the lovely second movement, Adagio, the style is more Haydnesque. Telling cello solos punctuate the proceedings at various intervals. The short Allegretto which comes next is a typical Haydnesque minuet. In the finely contrasting trio section, the cello presents the brief melody. The work concludes with a buoyant, dancing Rondo. First the violin and then the cello take turns presenting what is clearly folkloric material. This work can be presented in concert, not only because it is historically important showing what chamber music being produced in Russia, but also because it can stand on its own as a replacement for a Haydn. It is also warmly recommended to amateur groups with a strong cellist. The **Three Quartets of 1808** are similar to those of 1802.



In **Rudolf Tobias** (1873-1918), we have yet another composer of whom few have heard. Born to an Estonian churchman, Tobias began composing at an early age and was eventually sent to the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov. After graduating, he briefly worked in St. Petersburg before returning to Estonia. As a dearth of musical life there made prospects for a professional career rather grim, he decided to emigrate.

Settling in Berlin, Tobias was eventually appointed to a lectureship at the Royal Academy of Music where he replaced Engelbert Humperdinck. Having taken out German citizenship, he served briefly in the army during WWI. Poor health led to his discharge and eventual death. Today, he is widely regarded the first professional Estonian composer. He composed two quartets.

String Quartet No 1 in d minor was composed in 1899 for a chamber music competition sponsored by the famous Russian music publisher, Belaiev. The first movement to the Quartet, Allegro con moto, begins with an heroic theme introduced by the viola and cello. There is much agitation. The music sounds more Nordic than Russian. One might have thought that Svendsen or perhaps Grieg had been his teacher. The second movement, Andante mesto, is in the form of a dirge. One hears the influence of Taneyev, and in a fugal section, of late Beethoven. The scherzo, Allegro grazioso, is well-written and very exciting with hints of modernism. The trio is a wonderfully contrasting melancholy episode. The finale, Allegro, is perhaps the weakest of the four movements. Surrounded by much tremolo, the themes do not seem quite up to all the tension that is created. While not strikingly original, it is quite interesting, enjoyable to hear and shows considerable craftsmanship. Recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in c minor was composed in 1902. Its first movement, Allegro moderato e maestoso, seems to me to indicate that this composer had encountered Wilhelm Stenhammar's string quartets. The music shows a very definite Beethovenian influence, updated in much the same way the Swedish composer worked. There are many fertile ideas presented here. This movement makes a strong impression. The second movement is a furious scherzo, Allegro vivace, with a trio featuring the viola in a syncopated melancholy dance that provides a superb contrast—very good writing indeed. This is followed by a Nachtstück, gauze-like and haunting night music. It begins darkly in the cello and rises imperceptibly to ethereal heights in the violin. One hears very faint echoes of late Beethoven in this finely wrought music. Outstanding. The finale, Allegro con brio, has a Nordic-sounding theme for its first subject and is full of energy with an excellent ending. This work is a considerable advance over his first. A good choice for concert performance and amateurs.



Ernst Toch (1887-1964) is surely another important 20th century composer who has been elbowed aside in the ever-decreasing number of works which seem to be presented to the public on the concert stage. In Toch's case, this may well be because, first and foremost, he was a composer of chamber music; more specifically, a composer of string quartets. He wrote some thirteen. Without a body of successful 'public' works, many composers such as Onslow or Toch get lost in the shuffle. One wonders if either Shostakovich or Bartok would have attained a place on the stage if they had primarily written chamber music. Surely few composers have made their way as did Toch. From Vienna, and of lower-middle class Jewish origins, Toch's family, despite his obvious musical precocity, refused to give him any music lessons and actively discouraged him from studying music as they saw no future in it. Despite this, he somehow intuited musical notation at an early age, perhaps from watching a boarder practice the violin. Then one day, before he was 13, Toch discovered some pocket scores to Mozart's string quartets in a second hand book store. He purchased them and secretly, in the dead of night, started studying and copying out the scores. After copying three or four, he became aware of each movement's structure. Without lessons, he groped along, but "*Mozart replaced for me every living teacher and he outdid them all.*" However, after taking degrees in Philosophy and medicine, he did study at the Hochschule fur Musik in Frankfurt for four years. Although most reference sources usually note that Toch was in the forefront of the Neue Musik movement, he was not so much interested in atonality as in expanding the limits of tonality. His early quartets were written before he became interested in such things. His first five string quartets seem to have disappeared. They apparently were written while Toch was still in high school.

The earliest surviving work of which I am aware is **String Quartet No.6 in A Major, Op.12**, which was also written while he was in high school around 1905. One day his classmate and friend borrowed the score and without Toch's knowledge showed it to Arnold Rosé then concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic and leader of the famous quartet by that name. Toch first learned of this when he received a postcard from Rosé informing him the work had been scheduled for public performance. Interestingly, the music is much more modern sounding than his String Quartet No.7. The themes of the opening *Allegro tranquillo, sempre espressivo*, though still very romantic, are tonally more adventurous and strident. The technique bears similarity to the way Beethoven in his late quartets passes the themes between the various voices. The tonal wandering of the *Andante amabile* creates a cerebral and ethereal atmosphere, there is an almost but not quite French impressionist quality to the music. The scherzo-like middle section is a more dynamic. The ideas and the music are original. The lovely third movement, *Andante doloroso*, is not particularly sad but does have a tragic middle section. The finale, *Molto vivace e capriccioso* is highly charged and effective though perhaps overly long. This is a massive work, nearly 40 minutes in length, and so full of fecund musical thought, it is hard to imagine it came from the pen of a 17 year old who had literally taught himself how to compose. Highly recommended for concert and good amateurs.

String Quartet No.7 in G Major, Op.15, dates from 1907. The idiom is late romantic with a heavy dose of Brahms. An opening *Allegro* begins genially and in not too swift a fashion. It is Johannes at his most good-natured. Warm, full-blooded and gracious, but not boisterous. The part-writing is good and the themes are very appealing. The following *Andantino* opens with a subject I found bore some resemblance to something else I knew, but could not identify. Finally, it came to me. (The 2nd movement to Pfitzner's 1886 Quartet No.1 in d minor—no opus number. It is only the opening phrase) A surprising and captivating mini-scherzo, the theme of which sounds a bit like the famous opening to Dukas' Sorcerer's Apprentice, is encapsulated within the *Andantino*. A scherzo, *Vivace, leicht und luftig zu spielen* comes next. It is brisk, gentle and airy. The music is an amalgam of post-Brahmsian humor with an updated bit of French rococo. A furious trio is full of Mendelssohnian dramatic effects. This is a very fine movement indeed. The finale, *Allegro poco vivace* begins with no real theme appearing for several measures. But when it does, it is both lyrical and dramatic. There is some hint of Brahms, mostly in the lovely second theme in the cello. Dating from 1907 and written at a time when Toch was beginning medical school, this music is self-assured. Really quite first rate. It would be a success in concert and would also be enjoyed by amateurs. I hope this recording signifies that someone is planning to bring out the parts to this music. The second work on the CD, written while Toch was still in high school, is **String Quartet No.6, Op.12 in A Major**. One day his classmate and friend borrowed the score and without Toch's knowledge showed it to Arnold Rosé (then concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic and leader of the famous quartet by that name.) Toch first learned of this when he received a postcard from Rosé informing him the work had been scheduled for public performance. Long thought lost, this is the first recorded performance of it. Interestingly, the music is much more modern sounding than Op.15. No one, I think, would guess it was the earlier of the two. The themes of the opening *Allegro tranquillo, sempre espressivo*, though still very romantic, are tonally more adventurous and strident. The technique bears similarity to the way Beethoven in his late quartets passes the themes between the various voices. The tonal wandering of the *Andante amabile* creates a cerebral and ethereal atmosphere, there is an almost but not quite French impressionist quality to the music. The scherzo-like middle section is a more dynamic. The ideas are original. The lovely 3rd movement, *Andante doloroso*, is not particularly sad but does have a tragic mid-

dle section. The finale, *Molto vivace e capriccioso* is highly charged and effective though perhaps overly long. This is a massive work, nearly 40 minutes in length, and so full of fecund musical thought. It is hard to imagine it came from a 17 year old who had taught himself how to compose. Highly recommended.

String Quartet No.8 in D flat Major, Op.18 dates from 1909. It is in five movements, unconventionally arranged and adopts the free style of Beethoven's late quartets. The slow opening movement, *Langsam*, begins with a lengthy solo cadenza in the first violin. A richly chromatic, rhapsodic elegy by the full quartet follows, Next comes a lively, nervous scherzo, *Lebhaft*. The third movement, *Andante*, is quite lyrical and sounds rather like the theme music to morning television soap opera, *As the World Turns*. Then comes a playful, upbeat *Allegro giocoso*. Not that easy to play but has a nice contrasting trio section. The finale, *Allegro impetuoso ed appassionato* is thrusting and powerful and makes a strong impression. Good enough for concert and accomplished amateur players.

String Quartet No. 9 in C Major, Op.26 was composed in 1920. In the intervening decade which separates this work from Quartet No.8, much had happened including the First World War and the Pandemic of the Spanish Flu and the emergence of the Second Vienna School with its championing of serialism and atonality. While in this quartet, Toch did not eschew traditional tonality he moved to the very edge of traditional tonality, It was the last quartet in which he designated a key in the title. The opening movement, *Mit kraft*, sounds rather like the soundtrack of a murder mystery from Alfred Hitchcock. It is tonal, but just. The second movement, *Grazios und duftig*, shows him reaching back to the past. However, it's in the ecstatic *Adagio* where Toch pushes chromaticism to the breaking point. The martial finale, *Übermutig*, summons the world of Schoenberg as Toch frees himself from his tonal moorings but only briefly. Can be recommended for concert and only the best of amateur players.

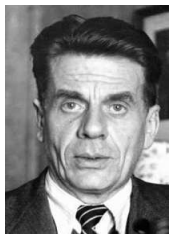
String Quartet No.10, Op.28 dates from 1923. Composed on the name 'Bass' from a cousin, Hans Bass, Toch used the letters of the name, which in German gives the notes B flat-A (sometimes transmuted to A flat)-E flat-E flat, as the thematic basis. Hindemith is now the background influence, especially in the exploratory *Adagio molto* and concluding *Lebhaft*: The drive of the opening *Energisch* is not really like Hindemith, while the brief scherzo *Katzenhaft schleichend* (Slinking like a cat, mysteriously) is a rather funny portrait of a cat on the prowl.

String Quartet No.11, Op.34 was commissioned by Paul Hindemith for the Donaueschingen Music Festival of 1924. A festival which featured new music. It is in four movements, *Sehr wuchtig, Vivace molto, Adagio and Allegro molto*. Certainly not a tonal work. There is similarities to Bartok. There are themes which can be followed and which are very interesting. The music is not harsh or violently dissonant, to the contrary. This is a work which is not hard to make sense of, though not at all easy to play. Good for concert, but only professional level amateurs.

String Quartet No.12, Op.70 was composed in 1949 in four movements—*Calmly and evenly flowing, utmost tenderness and intimacy, Adagio, Pensive serenade, and Vigorous*. The first movement does not hold one's interest. The *Adagio* is harsh and unpleasant. In the *Pensive serenade* it is the use of *pizzicato* which perhaps gives the music a serenade quality but it is not particularly gripping. The beginning of the finale is rough, edgy, very dissonant. The second subject is more appealing. However, I would not recommend this quartet for concert or to amateurs.

String Quartet No.13, Op.74 was finished in 1954. Also in four movements—*Molto tranquillo, Allegro non troppo, Slow, dolcissimo con espressione and Allegro assai*. It was commissioned by the Coleman Chamber Music Association of Pasadena, California in 1953. It is based on the 12 tone system to some extent. However, this quartet sounds much more like No.11 than No.12. The themes are interesting, the music, though by no

means traditionally tonal, is not harsh or unduly dissonant. A work which could be given concert performance and recommended to very good amateur players.



Eduard Toldra (1895-1962) was born in the Catalan town of Vilanova i la Geltrú not too far from Barcelona. He studied violin with his father and then at the Conservatory in Barcelona where he also studied composition. In 1911 at the age of 16, he founded and performed in one of Spain's leading string quartets, which for many years, touring throughout Europe. Later in his career, he founded the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra. He wrote two works for string quartet.

His **String Quartet in c minor** was composed in 1914 and was meant for his own group, the Renaixement String Quartet. The opening movement, *Allegro assai, agitato*, is very Mendelssohnian and sounds as if it could have been written 60 years earlier. This perhaps can be excused by the fact that he was only 19 and living in a relative backwater, at the time, culturally speaking. The second movement, *Scherzo molto allegro*, although it too harks back to Mendelssohn and mid German Romanticism, is well done and appealing. Next is a dignified and noble *Andante sostenuto*. The finale, a playful *Allegro quasi presto*, tops off a quartet I could have recommended for concert had it been written in 1850. It is still worthy of concert but only for historical purposes to show as an example of Catalan string quartet writing. Certainly this is good choice for amateurs.

Vistes al Mar was composed in 1920. Toldra had come a long way since his first work. The Renaixement Quartet had a European reputation and Toldra most likely wrote the work for his group to take with them on tour. It is in three movements, each based on a poem by a well-known Catalan poet. And the music features Catalan folk melody through the filter of French Impressionism. Obviously, as the title of the work suggests, it was meant to be descriptive of the sea in three of its aspects, and containing some hints of French Impressionism. The work opens with an upbeat *Allegro con brio*. Picture sailing on sunny day, the breeze in the sails, all going well. The middle movement, is calm and quiet, what sailors call the doldrums. The finale, *Molto vivace*, is also upbeat, all ahead full. This is a fine work which can be recommended for concert and to amateurs.



Luigi Tomasini (1741-1808) was born in the Italian town of Pesaro. If, today, he is remembered at all, it is as the concertmaster of the Prince Esterhazy's orchestra in Eisenstadt. The same orchestra of which Joseph Haydn was the director. Haydn wrote many of his quartets with Tomasini in mind. Tomasini himself was a composer, writing some thirty string quartets. Some scholars have suggested that Tomasini

studied violin with Tartini and Leopold Mozart. Whatever the case, his playing was famous and at age 16 he was engaged to play in the Prince's orchestra. Most of these quartets must be moldering in various European libraries. His output was cataloged by Friedrich Korcak. Three of his quartets were recorded in 2004. I have only heard them.

A **Quartet in D Major Kor.5** dates from 1770. It is in three movements, lacking a minuet. In part written in concertante style, in other parts in the more advanced style Haydn pioneered. The cello is given a prominent role which makes the work rather unusual for its time. Other than the quartets of Haydn, this quartet is the most advanced work that I have heard, including those of Mozart, from 1770. Not surprisingly, the quartet sounds a lot like Haydn, quite possibly because it is thought that Haydn gave Tomasini composition lessons. A surprisingly good quartet which could be programmed for concert and recommended to amateurs.

Quartet in B flat Major, Op.8 No.3, Kor.10 dates from 1790. It was the third of a set published in Vienna and probably the best known set of quartets he wrote. The first movement has many extended virtuoso passages for the first violin, which go on longer than one would expect for a quartet written at this time. So the style is a mix of concertante and polyphonic. Interestingly, the cello is given the same treatment. However, the second movement, an *Adagio* is on a par with Haydn's Op.71 and 74. Quite a good movement. The third movement is a typical Haydn minuet. Not at all bad. The finale, a *Presto*, is also Haydnian. Good for amateurs with a strong first violinist and cellist.

Quartet in d minor, Op.8 No.4, Kor.11 The opening movement, *Allegro spiritoso*, is written concertante style with long solos for the first violin and cello. Next comes an *Andante sostenuto*, which is a theme and set of variations. The Menuetto is accomplished showing the influence of Haydn. The finale, *Rondo allegro spiritoso* makes the strongest impression of the quartet.

I was a little surprised that the cello was given the same amount of virtuoso passages in these works as the first violin until I learned that the quartets were probably written not only for Tomasini on first violin but also for his colleague, Anton Kraft, the cello virtuoso and principal cellist of the Esterhazy orchestra.



Fernand de La Tombelle (1854-1928) was born in Paris and studied piano with his mother who had been a student of Liszt and Thalberg. He also studied organ with the famous French organ virtuoso Alexandre Guilmant. At the Paris Conservatory he studied composition with Theodore Dubois and organ with Guilmant. Subsequently, he became a well-known organist in Paris. He was, along with Vincent d'Indy, Guilmant and Charles Bordes, one of the founders of the Schola Cantorum, France's other great conservatory. He taught there for many years. He wrote in most genres. He wrote one string quartet.

His **String Quartet in E Major, Op.36** was the winner of the 1896 prestigious Chartier Prize for an outstanding chamber music composition. Dedicated to his friend and colleague Vincent d'Indy, the quartet has four movements. It begins with a *Largo* introduction, the theme to which is calm and cheerful. Almost imperceptibly, the *largo* fades away into an *Allegro* in e minor. However, it reappears at the end of the movement a la Cesar Franck. Next comes an *Allegretto assai scherzando* in which two rhythmic themes alternate, vying for attention. The third movement, *Adagio con molto espressione*, is lyrical and meditative in mood, with several dramatic climaxes and much depth of feeling. In the finale, *Allegro con brio*, the minor and major modes struggle for dominance, with an upbeat theme in the major eventually winning out. A solid work which can withstand concert performance and can also be recommended to amateur players.

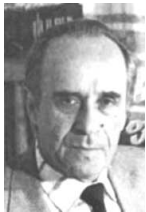


Donald Tovey (1875-1940) was born in the English town of Eton. He studied piano privately and subsequently attended Oxford and the Royal Academy of Music in London where he studied composition with Hubert Parry. He enjoyed a career as a concert performer as well as a composer and served as a Professor of Music for more than 25 years at Edinburgh University. Today he is best remembered for his essays on music, but he regarded himself first and foremost as a composer. Tovey wrote in most genres and his compositions were not only respected but regularly performed in such important venues as London, Vienna and Berlin. But like the works of so many others, it has inexplicably disappeared from the concert stage. He wrote several chamber music works, most dating from the last decade of the 19th century up to the First World War. He wrote two works for string quartet.

His **Air and Variations in B flat Major, Op.11** date from 1900. This is a massive affair equal in length to a full Brahms quartet. The air, the theme which begins the work, is quite simple and of a gentle nature. The title of the work implies a link with the Baroque and indeed there is certainly an aura of the baroque to the music, however, the treatment is thoroughly modern. The different styles and invention of each of the variations clearly showcase Tovey's masterful compositional technique. Along with Josef Rheinberger's Theme and Variations for String Quartet, Tovey's Air and Variations is the finest work of its kind and like the Rheinberger should be a must for every string quartet player at some time in their life. Also an excellent choice for concert.

String Quartet No.1 in G Major, Op.23 was completed in 1909. The opening movement, *Andante pomposa e galante*, is written on a large scale. The movement's marking very accurately describes the mood and style of the main theme which is extensively developed. The second movement, *Pastorale, Allegretto teneramente*, is an updated example of its baroque antecedent. Next comes a meditative, somewhat dreamy *Poco adagio, sempre sostenuto*. The finale, *Allegro commodo*, opens with a brief, quiet introduction before the energetic main section is brought forth. This is a solid work which can be recommended to amateurs but I do not think it strong enough for concert.

String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.24 is a big, five movement, lengthy work. The opening movement, *Allegro con molto tranquillo*, lacks excitement and the length is not justified by the material. A *Scherzo vivace assai* with a slower trio that shows the influence of Beethoven, then a *Larghetto*, then a *Berceuse* and finally a *Grave, allegro moderato* with a fugue based on part of the Catholic mass. This is a big hodge podge which, although it has some good moments, I cannot recommend.



Sul Khan Tsintsadze (1925-1991) was born in the town of Gori, a provincial capital in the Georgian Republic. He studied cello and composition at the Moscow Conservatory. He is generally considered the most important Georgian composer of the 20th century. He wrote twelve string quartets as well as a set of miniatures for quartet. I've not played any of these, but I have heard several.

Probably his most popular work are the **Miniatures for String Quartet based on Georgian Folksongs**. It's not entirely clear how many of these he wrote. Some sources give the number as 8 others as 21. Just as to when they were composed is also not clear. Most sources give the 1940s. These are entirely tonal and very appealing but by no means easy to play. They have interesting names such as *The Nagging Wife*, *Firefly*, *Indy Mindi*. They are magnificent and a great for concert but I doubt many amateur groups are going to manage these.

String Quartet No.1 dates from 1947. The opening movement wanders and does not hold one's attention, however the *Scherzo* which comes next is hard driving and riveting tour d'force, but very difficult to play. A slow, ethereal movement follows. The finale begins with a very rhythmic, pounding theme, perhaps a kind of rustic dance, not particularly attractive. There is much rushing about but in the end, it does not stick with one. One can follow the thematic material in this essential tonal work. Audiences may find interesting but it is beyond most amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 was composed the following year in 1948. It begins with a slow, somewhat sad introduction and is followed by a busy, upbeat main section. In second place is a fleet *Scherzo* full of racing triplets. This is an outstanding movement which makes a strong impression. A substantial slow, lyrical movement is in third place. Very attractive. The finale has the same main theme used in the opening movement and it takes a while before it is developed into something different, a kind of traveling folk music. On the whole this quartet makes a better impression. Okay for concert and to proficient amateur players.

String Quartet No.3 dates from 1951. It opens with a very restless subject. There is a lot of scurrying about but it does not create much of an effect, nor does the slow section which follows. Another racing, triplet laced *Scherzo* is next. Not as effective as the previous two, but very similar sounding—the theme played over a lot of racing, background accompaniment. A tender, lyrical slow movement is third. The finale, a quick movement, again primarily a bunch of racing triplets, too many and for long mar the movement, although there is a fine, contrasting second theme. It is not up to No.2. Not for concert nor amateurs.

String Quartet No.6 was completed in 1968. The style has changed to some degree in that the tonalities are harsher. But the rhythmic pulses are the same. It consists of one movement divided into five open sections. The first section, marked *Andante sostenuto* is rough and intense. The *Allegro assai* is dramatic and intense but not particularly pleasant. There is a fugal section. Another *Andante sostenuto* follows, then an *Allegro scherzando*, which sounds not unlike a grotesque and fantastic dance, with lots of glissandi. The final section is yet another *Andante molto sostenuto*. It is not atonal by any means but it is not an enjoyable experience. I would not program it for concert and amateurs will never be able to get through it.

String Quartet No.7 dates from 1970 and was inscribed by the composer, To the Memory of Bela Bartok, who by this point had been dead twenty five years. It is sad in a sort of bizarre way. Lots of sound effects from moving the fingers up and down the finger board to powerful pizzicato. Hard to know what Bela would have thought of it. As a one time experience, maybe it could be brought into concert as something to talk about on the way out of the concert hall. Amateurs can forget about it.

String Quartet No.8 was finished in 1974. It opens very softly. Not much is happening but one gets the feeling that something is going to happen as the slow tempo gradually picks up. But in the end nothing does happens as the tempo slumps back to its original pace. Boring. A powerful and impressive *Scherzo* follows. His *schermo* are rarely bad. He had an affinity for them, all of which have a lot of very quick rhythms. A dark, lugubrious slow movement follows. The finale is nervous, frenetic, racing all over the place. If one listened to this over and over, perhaps it would trigger a nervous breakdown. There are slower sections where next to nothing happens. This does not seem like a concert choice to me. Again, it is beyond amateurs.

String Quartet No.10 dates from 1984 and was called the *Polyphonic*. It is in four movements. The opening *Allegro con fuoco* has its moments. Much forward motion, it is more edgy than harsh, lots of rushing about. Second is a *Larghetto* in which nothing happens for a rather long time. Finally things get going with some drum like pizzicato episodes before it slinks back in the mud. The *Allegro scherzando* which comes third is frenetic but undeniably interesting. The quartet ends with an *Adagio* which of all of the movements approaches, at least in the beginning the closest to traditional tonality. It starts with a long cello solo before the others join in. The mood is sad and dejected. It might be presented in concert, but amateurs can skip it.

String Quartet No.11 dates from 1986. It is a short work in one movement. Not much happens at least in the beginning. Rather like a group of people sitting around in a bus station having missed their bus. Finally some attempt at lyricism creeps in as the temperature or at least the pitch rises. But all in all this quartet does not have a great deal to recommend.

Erik Tulindberg (1761-1814) was born in Vähäkylä in western Finland. An ethnic Swede, he played the violin and cello. Though he lived most of his life in Finland, he was a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. Finland had a large Swedish population and had once belong to Sweden before it was lost to Russia in the Great Northern War. His music shows the influence of Haydn and to a lesser extent the music of the Mannheim School,

namely the Stamitzes. He wrote six string quartets in two sets of three each, his **Op.2 and Op.3**. A copy of Haydn's string quartets was found among his possessions after his death. These are pleasant, unassuming works, suitable for amateur players of most accomplishments and advanced students. The only reason for one of these quartets to be performed in concert is that they represent the earliest known examples of string quartets coming from a Finnish composer, albeit an ethnic Swede.



Joaquín Turina (1882-1949) was born in the Spanish city of Seville. At the age of four he was given as a gift an accordion and surprised everyone with the speed and facility he learned to play. In 1894 he began his formal studies of harmony theory and counterpoint. Almost immediately he began to compose small pieces. In 1905 he, as most other Spanish composers of the time, went to Paris where he studied piano with Moszkowsky and composition under Vincent d'Indy in the Schola Cantorum. He became good friends with Isaac Albeniz and Manuel de Falla. It was Albeniz who encouraged him to find inspiration in the popular music of Spain and Andalusia. After finishing his studies, Turina moved to Madrid where he spent the rest of his life composing and teaching. Turina's first works were entirely influenced by the French impressionist school. After hearing them, Albeniz told him, "You must base your art in popular Spanish or Andalusian song, given that you are from Seville." He wrote one complete string quartet and a few other shorter works.

His **String Quartet in d minor, Op.4** dates from 1910 and was dedicated to Albeniz whose advice he took to heart. The opening movement, Prelude, has given the Quartet its nickname "De la guitarra". The work begins three upper voices striking loud chords which are followed by the cello's pizzicato passages which evoke the sound of the guitar. The main theme is then given out by the cello. It is a lazy loping syncopated Spanish melody. A highly evocative atmosphere is created as gradually the tempo picks up and the mood becomes brighter. The first theme of the second movement, Allegro moderato, clearly shows the influence of Turina's teacher, d'Indy. The second theme is vaguely Spanish. The third movement, Zorzico, Assez vif, begins with a slow diffident section which suddenly gives way to the turbulent and very Spanish dance, the Zorzico. The fourth movement, Andante quasi lento, is quiet and reflective but there are also moments of intensity. The upbeat finale, Allegro moderato, is a fusion of Spanish rhythm and melody with the expression of the French impressionist school. This is a first rate work which belongs in the repertoire and which can be enjoyed by amateurs.

La Oración del Torero ("The Bullfighter's Prayer") is a chamber tone poem composed in 1925, originally composed for a group of Spanish lute players. In 1926 Turina arranged the piece for string quartet, for piano trio, and also for string orchestra. He described his inspiration for the work: It is in the version for string quartet that the work became known. Turina wrote, "One afternoon watching the bullfighting in the Madrid arena, I saw a small chapel behind the arena walls. It was filled with incense, where toreadors went right before facing death. It was then there appeared, in front of my eyes, I witnessed the contrast between the hubbub of the arena, the public that awaited the fight, and the men standing in front of this small altar, praying to God to protect their lives." In a single movement Turina blends the two Spanish themes of religion and bullfighting, the musical sounds of the bullfight alternating with the prayer of bull fighter. Two contrasting atmospheres, one with pizzicato sounding like guitars and the other full of bravado and passion. The cello represents the voice of the bull fighter, heard alternating between a 'paso doble' theme conjuring up of the arena and freeform recitatives in the style of flamenco verses, or 'coplas. Impressionistic sections grow increasingly passionate as the bull fighter ap-

proaches the potentially fatal spectacle, a test of both his courage and his honor. Then in a dreamy reflection full of longing and hope he makes his prayer that he will be protected and with this reverie the music slowly dies away. A great work, excellent concert choice and not beyond amateurs.

Serenata for String Quartet, Op. 87 dates from 1935 and was dedicated to his son. It is in one movement but four sections. This lovely work, very Spanish sounding, is also a great choice for the concert hall and can be recommended to rhythmically secure amateur ensembles.



Viktor Ullmann (1898-1944) was born in Teschen near the Czech-Polish border. Although both his parents were Roman Catholics and his father was an Austrian noble, the families were originally of Jewish descent. He studied composition with Arnold Schönberg in Vienna, Alexander von Zemlinsky and Alois Haba in Prague. He held various positions as music director and professor. He was trapped in Prague during the Nazi invasion of 1939 and was in 1942 interned at Terezin Concentration Camp. He was encouraged to compose while there and completed some 16 works. He wrote three string quartets but no one seems interested in the first two.

His **String Quartet No.3, Op.46**, which was completed at the beginning of 1943 was written in the Terezin. It must be noted that Ullmann was a serial composer, however, his tone rows were different from Schönberg's 12 tone rows. He seems much more attracted to traditional tonality, although this is not a tonal work in the traditional sense, it is tonal rather than atonal. Its themes could even, in part, be sung. It is in four movements that are all linked. The opening Allegro moderato begins in a sad and yearning mood mixed momentary outbursts of passion. It is lyrical in nature. Later, comes a Presto, it is an attractive scherzando section which resembles a spooky waltz. The dark Largo which follows is empty and bleak. The short finale, Allegro vivace, is a thrusting affair which creates the sensation of falling downward in spiral. It is full of suspense, dread and even horror, but it is not harsh. The coda introduces the opening theme from the first movement and fashions a rousing conclusion. This is an interesting work which could withstand a very occasional concert performance. Experienced amateurs can get through it as well.



Pierre Vachon (1738-1803) was born in the French city of Avignon. He studied the violin with the Italian virtuoso Carlo Chiabrano in Paris. Like most of his contemporaries, he was a prolific composer writing some 30 string quartets between 1775 and 1782. These seem to be the only works for which he is remembered. There have been some recordings and a few modern editions of his **Opp.5, 7 and 11**

each a set of six quartets. I have had the opportunity to play quartets from each of these sets and can say with considerable confidence that though they are pleasant, they are also unremarkable. There is no reason to program them in the concert hall, although amateurs may well find pleasure in them as they are not terribly difficult. Still, given the wealth of works available from this period by other composers that are far more worthy of your attention, I cannot recommend that much time be spent on these.

Mieczyslaw Vainberg (1919-96), who preferred this non-German spelling to the original 'Weinberg,' is a composer waiting to be discovered. While not entirely unknown, he is hardly a household name among musicians and his music is rarely if ever heard outside of Russia. Vainberg wrote an incredible amount of music and treated almost every genre. He wrote some 17 string



quartets. He was born in Warsaw in 1919. His father was a violinist and composer for the Jewish Theater in that city. Through his father's auspices, he began his career there as a pianist while only 10. Two years later he enrolled in the Warsaw Conservatory and studied piano. When the Germans attacked Poland in 1939, Vainberg fled to Minsk where he studied composition with Vasily Zolotarev, one of Rimsky-Korsakov's students.

When the Germans invaded Russia in 1941, Vainberg fled eastward eventually working at the Tashkent Opera in Uzbekistan. In 1943, Vainberg sent the score of his First Symphony to Shostakovich who arranged for it to be performed in Moscow. Thus began a life-long and close friendship between the two men. Vainberg later wrote, "I am a pupil of Shostakovich. Although I never took lessons from him, I count myself as his pupil, his flesh and blood." For his part, Shostakovich dedicated his 10th String Quartet to Vainberg. He wrote 17 string quartets. I am not familiar with all of them but will discuss those I have either played or heard.

The first and second movements to **String Quartet No.1, Op.2/141** supposedly written before Vainberg fled Poland in 1939 are fairly modern sounding, full of the influence of the Second Vienna School and beyond. But in the third movement, Allegro molto, we hear the idiom and tonalities of Shostakovich in his middle quartets, especially the 8th. The original score to this work was either destroyed or lost and Vainberg did not take it with him when he fled. Vainberg appears to have reconstructed the Quartet some 48 years later in 1987 from memory. Although, the composer was reputed to have an extraordinary memory, it is unlikely that the Quartet was reconstructed entirely as it was without any benefit of the 48 intervening years of experience and the work exhibits certain features which seem unlikely to have been penned by an 18 year old piano student in 1937. One example is the extreme rhythmic complexity.

String Quartet No.3 in d minor, Op.14 dates from 1944 in three movements. It begins with an exciting Presto. The middle movement is a very focused intense Andante sostenuto. The finale, Allegretto, has a theme which sounds like it should lead to somewhere but seems to be repeating itself perhaps in canonic fashion. Despite much variation, the constant repetition leads to a sense of monotony. This is an interesting quartet, but the finale takes away from what otherwise would be a very good work. It could be performed in concert and managed by good amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 dates from 1945. The opening bars of the Allegro commodo, sound like something from the 1890s but very soon the music departs from traditional tonality into the realms of polyphony and then back again. There are hints of Shostakovich here and there. It consists of four themes which are related and keep turning into each other. The mood is constantly changing from serene to dramatic to sorrowful. The second movement, Moderato assai, is a kind of grotesque scherzo. The writing approaches the orchestral. The trio, when it finally arrives, comes as a shock. Divided mainly between the viola and the cello, each playing long sections alone, the texture becomes simple and stark. Third is a Largo martial which sounds rather funereal. The finale, Allegro moderato, has the first violin playing a bird like melody against a soft accompaniment in the other three voices. It is a trip through a forest of spooky sounds.

The three movement **String Quartet No.7 in C Major, Op.59** was composed in 1957. Its opening movement is a long, plodding Adagio. The mood is neither sad nor tragic, but one of depression and of being downtrodden. The musical language is clearly related to late Shostakovich but is perhaps a little more astringent tonally. The following Allegretto is remarkable for a its slow theme which is accompanied by fast, nervous background passages and the constant strumming of pizzicato. The mood, though not as grim as the preceding movement, is not

cheerful even though the tempo eventually picks up. The finale, Adagio—Allegro, is in two parts. The first is clearly related to the thematic material of the opening Adagio. The Allegro section is a fugue followed by a series of variations, each ratcheting the intensity up a notch until a climax is reached and the variations are softly reprised in reverse order before the adagio introduction concludes this very original and impressive movement.

String Quartet No.8 in c minor, Op.66 is also in one movement, there are four distinct sections: Adagio—Poco andante—Allegretto—Allegro. The Adagio is doleful and filled with a sense of mourning. There is hardly any forward movement. Eventually, this is supplied by the slinky melody of the first violin in the Poco andante, but after its conclusion, the mood darkens, although not to the blackness of the Adagio. The following Allegretto, while not exactly lively, has a march-like, rustic energy and some elements of folk melody. The mood remains overcast and then is interrupted by chordal bursts, some of clashing tonality. The music then becomes faster and angrier. There is a Shostakovich moment with a series of bowed and plucked chords. This anger burns itself out and the coda is a plunge into a dark pool of silence. The strange concluding pizzicato chords are like the ringed ripples, which come after a pebble is thrown into a pond, showing that something has disappeared.

String Quartet No.9 in f sharp minor, Op.80 dates from 1964. The opening Allegro molto is powerful and brusque, full of chords in all the voices. This gives it an orchestral quality. Anger, or perhaps angst, are the two words which probably best describe the mood of the music. It remains at fortissimo from start to its sudden finish. There is no pause, and the worried, scherzo-like Allegretto that follows is primarily soft and played pizzicato. The quartet's center of gravity is its big third movement, Andante, which appears to be a cross between a theme and variations and a passacaglia. The mood conveys a defeated sadness. The finale, Allegro moderato, begins quite softly and in a very unusual fashion. The sad main theme is a disembodied, very simple folk-dance, barely audible. The more voluble second theme is also dance-like. Anger hides beneath the energy, as at a party which may turn into a brawl. In conclusion, we have three grim and uncompromising works, which are also very interesting.

In **String Quartet No.10, Op.85**, we have a work from the composer's middle period. Although in four movements, it is to be played without any pause between them. The opening movement is a big, pensive Adagio. Though tonal, there is a feeling of stasis and slackness as the movement dies away pp. This is followed by a marvelously restless and haunting Allegro. The third movement, another Adagio, is a powerful lament wandering on the very borders of tonality. The finale, marked Allegretto, is a rather subdued dance with no tonal gaiety.

String Quartet No.17, Op.146 is Vainberg's last, composed in 1987. It was dedicated to the Borodin Quartet on their 40th anniversary. The opening Allegro is, for Vainberg, playful and happy in mood, tonally anchored in the key of D Major. There are still some storm clouds about, notably in a cello recitativo. There are three sections, Allegro, Andantino and Allegro played without pause. The Andantino has a pastoral but meandering quality to it, while the concluding Allegro is a recapitulation of the opening section.

Vainberg's music has been called "Shostakovich light" but for the most part it sounds rather different. There is less joyfulness, more introspection and sobriety. And for this reason, these quartets are less likely to be successful with concert audiences. And, the majority of these quartets are beyond amateurs.

Jan Baptist Vanhal (1739-1813 also spelled Vanhall, Wanhal, Wanhall) was born in the Bohemian town of Nechanice, then part of the Habsburg Empire. His initial studies were with a local musician, but later he moved to Vienna where he studied violin and composition with Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf. He also learned



both the cello and bass and became so proficient that he was able to play the cello part in a quartet which consisted of Dittersdorf on first violin, Haydn on second violin and Mozart on the viola. Vanhal tailored his output to economic realities of the day and composed, as did most of his contemporaries, a huge number of compositions in virtually every genre, including some 70 symphonies and numerous operas. A considerable part of his output was for various chamber ensembles. Today he is remembered mostly for his double bass concerto, but during his lifetime and for most of the first part of the 19th century, several of his works were quite popular. Mozart frequently performed one of his violin concertos in concert. Along with Haydn, Vanhal's works influenced and shaped Mozart's ideas and compositions. Vanhal wrote more than fifty string quartets, some experts think as many as 100. Most of these were composed before 1780. I will discuss three such works that I have performed which will give the reader a pretty good idea of what to expect of his quartets.

String Quartet in F Major, Opus 6 No.1 was the first of a set of six quartets composed in 1771. It is in three movements, typical of the so-called Mannheim school and neither Mozart nor Haydn had advanced beyond what we find here at that time. The opening Allegro is upbeat and full of energy. A very romantic and lyrical Andante serves as the middle movement, The finale, a Presto, is lively and full of forward motion. This is a work historically important because it provides a picture of one of the best examples of the Mannheim School by an important composer then working in Vienna alongside Mozart and Haydn. It can be recommended for concert for this reason in place of an early Haydn and recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet in A Major, Op.33 No.2 is from one of only two sets of quartets composed after 1780, in this case the mid 1780s. This Quartet is the second of a set of six. As a regular member of the above mentioned quartet, Vanhal would have been familiar with the developments that both Haydn and Mozart were making in their works. One result is that this quartet has four movements rather than the three that was typical for works of the Mannheim School. The first movement, Allegro moderato, starts off leisurely with an elegant theme stated by the first violin. One hears echoes of Mozart's Magic Flute in the high violin part. It may be that it was Mozart who borrowed from Vanhal. The second movement is a classical minuet but Vanhal entitles it Arietta I and Arietta II. The first is a clever responson between the upper and lower voices. The second is given over to the first violin. Next comes an Adagio sostenuto, with a main theme very vocal in quality. The finale, Allegro molto, is a lively affair which sounds quite a bit like Haydn's works from this period.

String Quartet in E flat Major, "Hoffmeister No.2" was composed around 1786 and was the second of a set of three which he dedicated to the composer and music publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister. A well-known personality in Vienna, Mozart also dedicated a quartet to Hoffmeister. Vanhal's Quartet in E flat Major is without opus number but was known as Hoffmeister String Quartet No.2. The opening movement Allegro con fuoco is full of energy and forward motion. The theme is syncopated and highly accented. The second movement, Adagio, is in the form of a serenade with the first violin given the lead. The finale, Allegro, is a rondo in 6/8. Here the thematic is passed from voice to voice a la Haydn. In short, probably any of Vanhal's many string quartets can be recommended to amateurs and a few of the better ones for concert on historical grounds.

János Vég (1845-1918) came from an aristocratic family and became Justice of the Hungarian Supreme Court, but music remained a dominant interest throughout his life. He studied composition with Mihály Mosonyi. He was a friend of Liszt and was

Vice President of the Budapest Academy of Music, under the presidency of Liszt, who was rarely in Budapest, hence leaving Vég in charge. While several of his works were published during his lifetime, his three string quartets in **Quartet in F Major**, **Quartet in g minor** and **Quartet in D Major** were only published in 2013. It is not known exactly when they were composed, probably between 1885 and 1905. Their regular form reveals a composer keen to follow classical traditions and a command of complex chromatic harmony shows a composer in touch with the progressive trends of his time. I have only heard these quartet but I can say they are engaging and very appealing. There are surprises along the way but they are not shocks. One is the outstanding second movement of the F Major quartet, a lovely, debonair Serenatina. It conjures images of the upper crust café culture of the Austro-Hungarian metropolitan elite. It is followed by a gorgeous Andantino and upbeat Presto. The finale, Presto, of the g minor is also a real standout calling to mind the writing in Smetana's First Quartet. The opening movement, Grave, allegro, of the D Major quartet is definitely sounds like something written at the start of the 20th century, a bit like Zemlinsky before he discovered Schoenberg. All three quartets are very good and can be recommended for concert and to amateurs. However, the standout of the three is definitely the F Major Quartet.



Wenzel Heinrich Veit (1804-1864) was born in Reprnitz, at the time a German town in the Bohemian part of the Habsburg Empire. Until recently, he was ignored by the Czechs who have suddenly claimed him as one of theirs and have "baptized" him with the Czech version of his name Vaclav Jindrich Veit. Veit attended Charles University in Prague and studied law. He pursued a dual career of lawyer and judge as well as composer, mostly in Prague, although for a short time he held musical directorships in Aachen and Augsburg. Although he wrote a symphony, most of his works are either for voice or chamber ensembles, including 4 string quartets and 5 string quintets which were highly praised by Robert Schumann. The reason Veit and his music were ignored by the Czechs was two fold. First, because he was an ethnic German. But Veit was not a German nationalist. To the contrary, he supported an independent Bohemia, took the trouble as an adult to master the Czech language and wrote many songs in Czech using Czech folk melody. The second reason his music was ignored was that it did not sound Slavic enough. But this ignores the time period in which he wrote which was before the Czech national awakening. The Paul and Anton Wranitzky, Franz Krommer, Jan Vanhal and many Czech composers moved to Vienna and there is nothing particularly Slavic about their music either, but now they all have been repatriated as Czechs in good standing. They, however, were at least ethnic Czechs. But the truth with regard to Veit is that he was the most important Bohemian writer of chamber music before Dvorak. And, he did use Czech folk music in some of his works. What is unfair is that now, even English sources such as Wikipedia, wrongly refer to him by the Czech version of his name. A name he never used and which does not appear either on his baptismal certificate or gravestone. But music surmounts petty nationalism and we can all enjoy his fine compositions. Veit studied violin in Prague and played in a string quartet but as far as composition, he taught himself by studying the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Onslow.

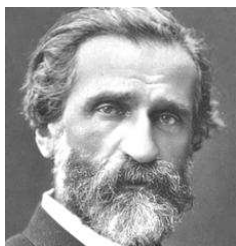
String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.3 dates from 1834. The main theme to the opening Allegro moderato is first introduced by the cello but quickly picked up by the rest. It is a lively and dramatic affair showing the influence of Onslow. The second movement, Menuetto, allegretto, is charming and slight sad. The trio section is bright and lively and a bit faster than the trio. Third comes an Andante marked Theme Russe. The theme is, in fact, the newly composed Russian National Anthem, God save the

Tsar, by Alexei Lvov. It is followed by effective four variations. The finale, Presto agitato, opens in very dramatic fashion and the main theme is a resposion between the first violin and cello. The lovely second subject is more lyrical. This quartet is good enough for an occasional concert performance and can be recommended to amateur groups with a technically strong first violinist.

String Quartet No.2 in E Major, Op.5 dates from 1835 and was praised by Robert Schumann for its style and workmanship. The work opens with somber introduction which leads to a more upbeat Allegro vivace. The second movement, Adagio cantabile quasi Andante, has the quality of a leisurely, slow paced intermezzo with lovely long-lined melodies. Next comes a hard driving downward plunging Scherzo. Presto with contrasting Alternativo. The finale, Rondo, Allegro non tanto, has for its main theme, a lovely and ingratiating melody which Veit develops quite attractively. A solid work recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major, Op.7 came in 1838. The work begins with an Allegro moderato e patetico, but there is no pathos in this genial and pleasant movement. The Menuetto allegretto which follows is also genial and pleasant. Next is an Andante, calm and reflective. The bright finale, Allegro molto, bustles along with racing passages in the first violin part. This is the least gripping of the first three quartets, but it can still be recommended to amateurs again with a adept first violinist.

String Quartet No.4 g minor, Op.16 was composed in 1840. The first movement, Allegro molto et appassionato, is just that, quick, full of passion and forward drive. A Menuetto allegretto ma non troppo is placed second. It is pleasant but unremarkable. Third is an Adagio, which like the slow movement of the second quartet, is full of long-lined singing melodies. The big finale is actually two movements in one—a frantic, very fast Allegro assai opens it and then an Andante con moto, marked Air de Boheme which a theme and variations placed is in the middle of the movement. The theme is a simple, popular Czech folk tune Mela jsem Holubka (I had a dove). So, despite the fact that Czech nationalists later attached Veit's music as not using Czech melodies, here was the first usage of a Czech theme, written before Dvorak's birth and before Smetana wrote his works. A good choice for concert and warmly recommended to amateurs.



Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) is of the most famous opera composers of all time and needs no introduction. However, there are very few people, musicians included, that know he had written a string quartet. His string quartet most likely would never have been written had it not been for the postponement for several months of the premiere of his opera Aida in Naples due to the illness of the lead singer. With time on his hands and nothing much to do, Verdi decided to occupy himself by composing a string quartet. It was to be his only purely instrumental work. However, he was no stranger to string quartets and wrote that he always kept the quartets of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven on his night stand to study before dropping off to sleep. That he only wrote one chamber work can be explained by the fact that in Italy, opera was everything and chamber music nothing. A successful opera brought fame and fortune. A successful chamber music work did little for an Italian composer's reputation or wallet. Verdi attached no particular importance to the Quartet, but it was so unique and original sounding that it became the best known string quartet by an Italian composer. Yet, the truth is, it is not so well known. Everyone associates the name of Verdi with opera. He is, along with Wagner, rightly considered the most important opera composer of all time. And even those who come across his quartet rarely stop to investigate. This is a shame.

The **String Quartet in e minor** was completed in 1873. The opening movement, Allegro, begins with a dramatic, urgent mel-

ody. A contrasting second subject is calmer and reflective. The movement is not developed in the traditional way and has many surprises and interesting twists and turns. A charming Andantino with a simple, naive but lovely main theme comes next. In the third movement, Prestissimo, Verdi shows why he was such a superb opera composer. The music is clearly operatic in nature, full of excitement, drama and fury. In the lovely trio section, the cello alone sings an extended but very fetching aria to the accompaniment of the other three voices. Verdi ends the work in surprising fashion with a fugue. Perhaps he was thinking of Beethoven who also thought to end one of his Late Quartets in this fashion. The finale is marked Scherzo Fuga, Allegro assai mosso, The marking of scherzo is an important clue as Verdi does not intend this to be a heavy, lugubrious affair as Beethoven's Grosse Fuga is, but rather a high-spirited piece--scherzo in Italian means joke, and the music, full of forward motion, conjures up a playful and festive atmosphere. It has received several recordings but it is rarely performed in concert, although it should be. Not beyond the ability of average amateurs.



Johannes Verhulst (1816-1891) was born in the Dutch town of Bloemendaal. He studied the violin and composition at the Royal Dutch Music School in the Hague. He became concertmaster of the Court Orchestra. Mendelssohn, while vacationing in Holland, was shown a composition by Verhulst by his composition teacher. Mendelssohn was so impressed that he agreed to take Verhulst on as student. Verhulst thus went to Leipzig to study with Mendelssohn and also got to know Schumann with whom he became good friends. After his studies with Mendelssohn, Verhulst pursued a dual career as conductor and composer. He wrote three string quartets. The first two were composed in 1838-39 while he was studying with Mendelssohn and they were both dedicated to him

String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.6 No.1 begins with an Allegretto molto espressivo, which starts off rather gently and takes a while to get going but is rather good. A sweet Adagio follows. It is very lyrical but lacks in drama. Third is a bustling Scherzo dominated more by its rhythm than the thematic material. The finale, Presto con fuoco makes good on the movement marking. It is fiery, full of forward motion and with decent theme. Although the influence of Mendelssohn hovers heavily over much of the work, especially in the first movement, it nonetheless is a pretty good work which can withstand concert performance and is warmly recommended to amateurs.

Robert Schumann had especial praise for Verhulst's the **String Quartet No.2 in A flat Major, Op.6 No.2** However, the opening movement, Allegro molto, though genial is rather flaccid with unmemorable thematic material. The Adagio sostenuto which comes next is a highly romantic song without words. Third is a decent Scherzo presto. The finale, Allegretto con molto giusto bustles along but the thematic material is pretty thin. It is not at all clear to me why Schumann selected this quartet rather than No.1. I cannot recommend this quartet for concert or to amateurs. As is often the case when composers write two works of the same kind one after the other, the second comes off second best.



José Vianna da Motta (1868-1948) was born on the Portuguese island of Sao Tome. He began piano lessons early and was soon adjudged a prodigy and sent to the Lisbon Conservatory, and later to Berlin where he studied with the Scharwenka brothers, Philipp and Xaver, and then with Franz Liszt in Weimar. Thereafter he pursued a career as a soloist, concertizing throughout the world while keeping Berlin as his base. After 1914, he

moved to Geneva and then returned to Lisbon, where he spent the rest of his life teaching and serving as director of the Lisbon Conservatory. Most of his compositions were for the piano, however, He did compose two string quartets and 2 additional movements for string quartet which are of no import. As for the quartets, I have been unable to determine when they were composed, but they sound like they were composed during the last decade of the 19th century or the first of the 20th.

String Quartet in E flat Major begins with an Allegretto molto espressivo that is a curious mix of late German Romanticism with some Portuguese elements. A pounding Scherzo comes second. There are several unusual effects mostly in the constant change of tempi. The contrasting trio is pastoral in mood. Third is an Adagio molto which sounds like a sweet parlor piece. The finale, Allegretto grazioso, is a bizarre mix of salon music with plodding lugubrious sections. It hardly makes for an adequate finale. I would give this one a miss.

String Quartet in g minor is subtitled *Cenas da Montanha* or scenes from the mountains. It is in three movements. Because the subtitle is in Portuguese one might expect something which sounded Portuguese. Not so the opening movement *Allegro vivace*, which is a bright, upbeat affair sounding of no particular nationality, and certainly not of Portugal. The middle movement, *Adagio*, does sound vaguely like something from Portugal. A lovely shepherd plaint perhaps with a lively folk dance in the middle which serves as a kind of *Presto*. The orchestral finale, *Presto*, is dominated by its rhythms which might be some sort of festive march. Perhaps it is hard to musically conjure up mountain scenes. Certainly, here it does not. This is a better work than the E flat Quartet which can perhaps be recommended to amateurs but I would not bring it into the concert hall



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 Dame, the most prestigious post an organist could hold in France.

His **String Quartet in d minor, 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 is a very polished work and would be successful in concert and could be recommended to amateurs.

Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881) was born in Verviers, Belgium. He received his first violin instruction from his father, subsequently studying with Charles de Bériot. He toured Europe for several decades and was regarded as one of the leading violinists



of his time. Schumann compared Vieuxtemps to Paganini, and Paganini, himself, was extremely impressed when he heard Vieuxtemps at his London debut in 1834. Vieuxtemps also devoted himself to composition, having studied composition with Simon Sechter in Vienna, and Anton Reicha in Paris. His violin concertos are still in the repertoire. In addition to this, he became an important teacher, founding the violin school in St. Petersburg and teaching at the Brussels Conservatory, where Eugène Ysaÿe was among his many students. Although the bulk of Vieuxtemps' compositions were for the violin, he often turned to other instruments, writing two cello concertos, a viola sonata and three string quartets among other things. For many years, he toured as the leader of a string quartet, and wrote three string quartets himself.

String Quartet No.1 in e minor, Op.44 dates from 1871. The serious sounding opening movement, *Allegro con brio*, is almost orchestral in sound. The lyrical second subject makes a stronger impression than the first. There is a great deal of thrashing about in an attempt to create drama. The second movement, *Adagio espressivo*, is saccharin with slight leanings toward Beethoven. The Scherzo is full of movement but the themes are forgettable. The same can be said for the finale, *Allegro*. Rather surprisingly poor from a prominent quartet player. Give this a miss.

String Quartet No.2 in C Major, Op.51 was not published during his lifetime but is thought to have been composed between 1870's. It is a sunny work, full of good spirits. Classically structured, the melodies are romantic. The opening *Allegro assai*, seems inspired by early Beethoven. The lovely *Andante* which follows shows the same inspiration. Next comes a lively Haydnesque Scherzo, full of bounce. A nice trio section provides a fine contrast. The finale, an *Allegro*, is full of verve and élan. This quartet can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in B flat Major, Op.52 dates from the early 1880s. It was published in 1884. The opening *Allegro con spirito* has compelling themes but the movement is marred by sudden virtuoso passages in the first violin which add absolutely nothing. Without these it would have been a first class movement. The second movement is an attractive very Mendelssohnian *Intermezzo*. I by very, I mean it sounds as if Mendelssohn had written it. Despite this, it is a first class movement. Third is an *Adagio non troppo*. It too sounds like Mendelssohn. In this case one of his *Songs without Words*. The beautiful lyrical main theme is highly romantic. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, is bright and upbeat. Scherzo-like, the rhythm is more prominent than the melodic material. Again, there are some very fast running passages, in this case given to each instrument, but which really add nothing, although they do not mar the movement as they did in the first movement. Perhaps an occasional concert performance would be justified. It is not beyond the ability of good amateur players.



Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) Brazil's best known composer is widely regarded as one of the most important of the 20th century. While many of his works for orchestra and or voice and instruments, such as his many Choros and *Bachianas brasileiras*, are widely performed, his chamber music, of which he wrote a considerable amount, is virtually unknown outside of Brazil. This is certainly a great pity as many masterworks are to be found among his 17 string quartets, three piano trios and several other chamber compositions. Villa-Lobos once stated, "I love to write string quartets. One could say it is a mania." He claimed to have learned quartet technique from having studied the quartets of Haydn. Villa-Lobos was born in Rio de Janeiro.

His father was an amateur musician and much of what he learned was from hearing and taking part in the chamber music evenings held at his home. He learned to play the cello, clarinet and guitar and did attend the Conservatorio de Musica where he studied with Alberto Nepomuceno, then Brazil's leading. Afterwards, for a decade, beginning in 1905, Villa-Lobos explored the native and folk melodies of interior Brazil paying especial attention to the melding of African with Portuguese melody. Between 1916-1920, he was greatly influenced developments in modern French music due to the visit to Brazil by Darius Milhaud and Sergei Diaghilev among others. In the 1920's, he made two visits to Paris and familiarized himself further with current developments.

String Quartet No.1 dates from 1915 and is unlike any of his others. It is a folkloric suite of six pieces, alternately lyrical and dancelike, nostalgic and happy. Its language is romantic, and its structure is deliberately simple. Four of the movements are virtually monothematic; the third and fifth are in ternary song form. A Cantilena, Andante with the character of a serenade establishes a songlike mood at the outset. This is followed by Brincadeira Allegretto scherzando, a lively Brazilian polka. Canto lirico Moderato is expressive and contemplative, or perhaps tinged with irony and meant as a caricature of the romantic aria. A more animated Cançoneta Andante, quasi allegretto follows. Nostalgia pervades Melancolia Lento, the quartet's most fully developed and true slow movement. Finally, Saltando como um Saci Allegro, roughly translatable as Jumping Like an Imp, is a fugal dance with a catchy tune. The imp refers to Saci Perere, a mythical, one-legged black dwarf who wears a red cap, frequents jungle areas and delights in frightening people. An excellent choice for concert and warmly recommended to amateur players.

String Quartet No.2 also dates from 1915. It was composed based on the cyclic principles developed by César Franck, who along with Vincent d'Indy and Debussy influenced the work. That said, the opening Allegro non troppo does not sound like any of those composers. The theme is porous and the music is very polytonal wandering about almost formless although there are a few brief instances of lyricism. A Scherzo follows. Again it is not easy to follow what is happening. The Andante which comes third is easier to follow. There is a kind of sweet neo-romanticism to it. The finale, Allegro deciso, presto, is nervous and edgy but captivating. However, this last movement cannot make up for the first three, and I cannot recommend it

String Quartet No.3 was completed in 1916 and subtitled Quarteto de pipocas, Popcorn Quartet. Actually he gave it the onomatopoeic, alliterative nickname pipocas e potócas popcorn and tall tales because of the persistent percussive pizzicato patter in the second movement, a scherzo. A densely scored Allegro non troppo, does sound like a direct descendent of French Impressionism. Here bits of Ravel, there bits of Debussy. The Molto vivo, which comes second and gave the quartet its name, is a tour d'force, a highly original and gripping movement. Not easy, however, to get the pizzicato right at tempo. The Molto adagio which comes third features a solo in the first violin a strumming accompaniment. The mood is dejected and desolate. Later the cello gets a similar solo. An interesting movement. The finale, Allegro con fuoco, with its highly articulated rhythms sound like train chugging along or perhaps jungle drums beating. French Impression is to be found here but also much that is original. This quartet deserves to be heard in concert and perhaps can be managed by amateurs who are close to professional standard.

String Quartet No.4 was composed in 1917. The opening Allegro con moto sounds more like No.2 with amorphous thematic material, polyphonic and wandering. The second movement, Andante tranquillo, has a mysterious sound due to being muted. It is interesting and effective. Next is a Scherzo, allegro vivace, which sounds like a lopsided, grotesque march. It holds one's interest. The finale, Allegro, is upbeat and it is possible in part to follow what is going on. Some interesting things here, but there

are many other quartets of his which would go down much better in concert. While good amateurs could get through this, it is not one of the first quartets of his I would recommend to try.

String Quartet No.5, which became known as Quarteto Popular No.1, dates from 1931 and is perhaps his most appealing and inventive. The first movement, which is the longest, consists of seven separate episodes: Poco Andantino, Un poco vivo with its playful harmonics and lovely cello solo, Tempo primo, Lento, Allegro vivace, Vivo and Presto. Un poco vivo with its playful harmonics and lovely cello solo, the stirring, melancholy Lento and the Allegro vivace, a powerful, syncopated Brazilian native dance. The second movement is in four parts, Vivo e energico, Lento, Tempo primo and Molto lento. This spectacular movement presents the spooky night music of the Brazilian jungle. One can hear the animals calling out of the dark from among the hidden foliage. The third movement, also in four parts--Andantino, Tempo giusto, Adagio and Andantino, begins with a rhythmic Indian section which leads to a short dramatic cello melody followed by a highly romantic subject. The finale, Allegro, begins with an unmistakably Indian dance motif, at first threatening and then sprightly. A playful folk dance played with harmonics in all the voices follows, then a wild Brazilian folk dance brings the movement to a close. This quartet qualifies for the sobriquet modern masterpiece. It belongs in the concert repertoire. The second movement is pretty difficult but top notch amateurs should be able to manage this first rate quartet.

String Quartet No.6 came in 1938. The opening Poco animato is mostly playful and upbeat. The second movement, Allegretto, begins in heavily accented fashion giving way to a lyrical cello solo over a pizzicato accompaniment. A good movement. Third is an Andante quasi adagio which takes some time to get going. It opens sounding like something will happen, but for a very long time nothing does. The finale, Allegro vivace, in mood is rather like the first movement, upbeat. Here the rhythm is more important than the thin thematic material. Not that interesting a work. It can be left alone.

String Quartet No.7 was completed in 1942. Villa Lobos dubbed it the Concertante Quartet because of the great technical difficulties it presents the players. The first movement is interesting but the thematic material is amorphous. An air of mystery and expectation hangs over the second movement. Andante, like a heavy cloud. The Scherzo, allegro vivace which follows is nervous but not really focused. A lot of scurrying about but in the end it leaves little impression. The opening rhythm of the finale, Allegro giusto, gives the impression that something exciting is going to happen, instead it is as if one has fallen down a flight of stairs into an unlit basement where weird things happen. It has a lot of bustle to it but really this is a kind of superficiality.

String Quartet No.8 came in 1944. Villa Lobos claimed that he aimed to write an atonal quartet. Its four movements, Allegro, Lento, Scherzo vivace and Quasi allegro do not sound all that atonal to me. I found little difference in how they sounded from Nos 6 and 7 and in some ways this seems a better work. The first movement, a pounding Allegro is interesting and it is possible follow the thematic material. The Lento which follows is lyrical and really sounds more tonal than polytonal. It is a nice movement. Third is a wild, whirling Scherzo vivace. Not at all easy to play but a very effective movement. The finale, Quasi allegro, opens in lopping fashion. This is the least effective and focused of the movements. The quartet is strong enough to be brought to concert but it is not a work for amateurs.

String Quartet No.9 was composed in 1945. The opening Allegro is unfocused and not particularly attractive or interesting. This is followed by an Andantino vagaroso. I cannot recall seeing the term vagaroso before. It means slow. The movement is slow, nothing much happens for a long time and boredom sets before it does. Third is an Allegro moderato con bravura. There is nothing con bravura about the music unless it means the players had bet-

ter be brave to try and perform this difficult music which is not that edifying. The finale, *Molto allegro*, after a short slow introduction, there is a bunch of dissonant, harsh pounding. Slowly a theme, not at all unattractive makes its way over the sawing accompaniment and the whole thing turns out to be pretty good. If all of the other movements were as effective as the finale, I could recommend the quartet for performance. Not for amateurs.

String Quartet No.10 was completed in 1946. The opening *Poco animato* starts off rather indifferently but after a while, things get moving and more interesting. But there are also long stretches where things slump back into quagmire of boredom. The second movement, *Adagio*, sounds threatening with drum-like pizzicato. The theme is not easily discernable. The *Scherzo allegro vivace* which comes next features a lopsided lopping subject. The viola brings a melody over a highly rhythmic accompaniment. For some reason, just when things get going and get interesting, Villa Lobos, kills it and slides back into something much less effective and clear. The finale, *Molto allegro*, the thematic material is weak. Not one for concert or home.

String Quartet No.11 dates from 1947. The opening *Allegro non troppo* begins with upward scale passages in all voices. A march like theme emerges for a few seconds and then sinks quickly away like a stone in pond. No theme seems to last for more than a two measures. The *Scherzo vivace* which comes next has a lot of forward motion which does not make up for the rather threadbare thematic material. Third is an *Adagio, andante* which begins with a sad cello solo which goes on for some time. There is a sense of delicacy and sadness here. The finale, *Poco andantino*, begins as a jazzy dance theme. Here the rhythm makes an effective match for the thematic material. This is a good movement. If the first two movements matched the last two, this would be a decent choice for concert performance.

String Quartet No.12 was completed in New York in 1950. The work begins with a nervous but wandering *Allegro* with a few slight touches which conjure up New York. Second is an *Andante malinconico*, sad and melancholy with discernable themes some quite attractive, not at all bad. Third is an *Allegretto leggiero*. Not much in the way of thematic material, just rhythm. The finale, *Allegro ben ritmato*, interesting in part. I do not find this a choice for either concert or home.

String Quartet No.13 was also composed in New York in 1951. The opening *Allegro* starts with a theme which can be discerned. It is introduced in canonic fashion. The dark hued music is not particularly lively but it does hold one's interest. The *Adagio* which comes third, starts with an appealing violin solo over a quiet accompaniment. There is lyricism here. A good movement. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, has much of what all of his movements have, a lot of pounding, but here it works and is effective. It is good enough for concert and maybe accomplished amateurs.

String Quartet No.14 was completed in 1953 as the result of a commission from the Stanley Quartet of the University of Michigan. An *Allegro* with a wandering theme which does not really seem to go anywhere but makes a lot of noise. Second is an *Andante* the main theme, which actually only sounds like part of a theme, enters in canonic fashion. Eventually it wanders off in an altogether different direction. Third is a *Scherzo vivace* features some glissandi before settling down. It oscillates between being effective and just noisy. The finale, *Molto allegro*, is also noisy with any thematic material difficult to hear. Noise simply is not a substitute. I cannot recommend this quartet.

String Quartet No.15 was composed in 1954. It opens *Allegro non troppo*. The themes are discernible. Not too bad but as always there is a lot of non essential pounding chords interrupting proceedings. Second is an attractive bird like *Moderato* and has a vaguely jungle sound as in the Fifth Quartet and even a quote from his first quartet *Malincolia*. An very appealing movement. A playful *Scherzo vivo* follows. The finale, *Allegro*, begins in canonic fashion, the theme sounds half finished. This is followed

by a lot of needless wandering around. One waits for something exciting focused to take place but it just does not come. Truly sad after three really attractive movements to end with this. The old saying is to end strong, this quartet, which otherwise would be a good candidate for concert, does not do that.

String Quartet No.16 was composed in Paris in 1955. It opens with an *Allegro non troppo* which at first sounds like a bunch of rats wandering about the floor near a pantry. The thematic material is porous and not very interesting. The *Molto adagio* which comes second starts, like so many of his slow movements, with a couple of loud chords giving the impression that something dramatic is going to happen. But as often is the case with Villa Lobos, the music just wanders off aimlessly, except perhaps on the score. Third is an effective *Vivace*, lively and easy to follow what is happening. Well executed and appealing. The finale, *Molto allegro*, starts much the way the second movement does with loud chords but here there is more movement and drama. Though not always easy to follow, this is not a bad movement. It is a work with movements of widely varying quality.

String Quartet No.17 was Villa Lobos' last quartet completed in 1957. although he was purported at work on an 18th at the time of his death in 1959. It begins *Allegro non troppo* is more focused than usual. There is a touch of French Impressionism. There are several moods, playful, a bit sad. Second comes a sad and attractive *Lento*. Third is a *Scherzo*, which is pretty typical for Villa Lobos, lots of rhythm and motion, pounding chords interrupting for no good reason and less than great thematic material. The finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, after busting out of the gate it then dissolves briefly into lyricism. Not the strongest movement of this work but it does hold the interest. This quartet is strong enough for concert and maybe very accomplished amateurs.



When one hears the name of **Giovanni Battista Viotti** (1755-1824), the words "string quartet" are not among the first which come to mind. While most violinists know his name from the twenty plus violin concertos he wrote, a few of which are still occasionally performed and perhaps more frequently assigned to students, the general public has not heard of him. Viotti was perhaps the greatest technical player before the appearance of Paganini, whom he greatly influenced. But although he was a virtuoso violinist, he wrote a lot of music, as did most contemporary musicians, and not just for the violin. Viotti was born at Fontanetto Po in what is today known as the Italian province of Piedmont. His talent showed itself at an early age and he was taken to Turin where he studied with Gaetano Pugnani, one of the leading violinists of his day. Viotti subsequently became one of Europe's most prominent soloists. He also served as director of the Parisian Académie Royale de Musique. He did write a fair amount of chamber music, perhaps because throughout most of his life, he was an active chamber music player and performer. But as might be expected, in almost all of his string quartets, the first violin part has virtually all of the melody and interest. And though he was conversant with the works of Haydn and Mozart, he largely ignored their developments in favor of writing 'mini-concertos' for the first violin, with the other voices performing an accompaniment role as would an orchestra. As such, these works are *Quatuors Brillants*, a format made better known and used quite often by the virtuoso violinist Louis Spohr. However, his **Tre Quartetti Concertanti, G.112, 113 and 114** dating from 1813 are true concertante works offering extensive solos for each instrument and not just the first violin. In addition to string quartets,

The first of this set of three, is the **String Quartet in F Major, G.112**. The quartet opens *Moderato* with a gentle Italian vocal melody in the first violin. Soon the others join in and gradually momentum picks up. Later on, Viotti creates some very origi-

nal tonal touches in the dialogue between the cello and first violin. A somewhat dark Minuetto comes next. The pace is brisk--Piu tosto presto--is what Viotti asks for. The trio is a simple but lovely Ländler type theme. There is no slow movement, for the following Andante, while not fast, certainly does not lag. The theme is straight forward, but the embellishments give it piquancy. The finale, Allegretto, begins with a jaunty little melody which becomes more lively as it restated and again anticipates Paganini. Recommended both for concert and home.

The middle work of the set, **String Quartet in B flat Major, G.113**, is also in four movements. It begins with an introductory Larghetto, which is quite unusual in that it features three short cadenzas, one after another first the 1st Violin, then the 2nd Violin, and then the cello before the main part of the movement Tempo giusto gets under way. The lovely melody reminds one that it was Viotti upon whom Paganini modeled himself. The second movement, Andante, is the least concertante in style of the four movements and more in the harmonic style pioneered by the Vienna Classical Composers. It is a theme with a lovely set of variations. The third movement, a Minuetto, begins with an interesting stutter-step rhythm and has a somewhat sad quality to it. The finale, Allegretto, once again, gives us an example of the kind writing we associate with Paganini--but, of course, it was Paganini who learned from Viotti and not the other way around. The First Violin presents the opening theme with the Viola giving a jaunty rejoinder. Later, we hear the cello bring forth the lovely second theme high in its tenor register. Also recommended for concert performance and to amateurs.

The finale work of the set, the **String Quartet in G Major, G.114**, is, like the two preceding quartets, also in four movements. It begins with an introductory Larghetto. This is followed by the main part of the movement, Allegro commodo which has a coy and charming theme that suddenly explodes with energy. The somewhat sad, lyrical second theme is first heard high in the cello tenor register. A Minuetto commodo is placed second which, for the time, was unusual. The fetching themes are models of lovely Italian vocal melody. A languid Andantino follows. Here, Viotti combines the concertante style with the more forward technique found in the Vienna classical composers. In the lively finale, Allegretto vivace, we see how Viotti's music provided an example which Paganini was to follow. Again good for concert and home.



Jazeps Vitols (1863-1948 also known as Josef or Joseph Wihtols in German) was born in the Latvian provincial capital of Valmiera, then part of the Russian Empire. He studied composition at the St. Petersburg Conservatory under Rimsky-Korsakov and subsequently taught there eventually becoming a professor of composition. Among his many students were Myaskovsky and Prokofiev. After the First World War, with the break up of the Russian Empire and the creation of the state of Latvia, he returned to its capital, Riga, and established the Latvian Conservatory and served as conductor of the Latvian National Opera later renamed after him. There his students included the important 20th century Latvian composers Janis Ivanovs and Adolfs Skulte. He was the first Latvian composer to be known internationally. He was held in high regard by both Korsakov and Glazunov who were especially impressed by the brilliance of his compositional uses of tonality. Vitols' music falls into two periods. Up until 1910, he composed in the Russian National style espoused by Korsakov and Glazunov and his music sounds like that of the other composers of the Belaiev Circle such as Kopylov, Borodin, Sokolov and Gliere. However, Korsakov encouraged him to seek out Latvian folk music, which he did. After 1910, during the second period, he concentrated in putting native Latvian melodies into a classical format such as opera, lieder and choral works. He was the first Latvian composer to do

so and as a result, he is known as the Father of Latvian Music. His one string quartet is from the aforementioned first period.

String Quartet in G Major, Op.27 appeared in 1899. The opening movement, Allegro commodo, sounds like a kind of Idyll or Pastorale. The second somewhat somber theme is particularly appealing. It is in the second movement, Adagio elegiaco that we hear the use of Latvian folk melody. This is also true of the third movement, an Intermezzo, with its highly effective and charming use of pizzicato. The finale begins with a slow, Andante introduction which quotes the opening theme from the second movement. The main part of the movement, a nimble Allegro non troppo, also appears based on Latvian folk melody. This quartet presents no technical problems and is pleasure to play. Warmly recommended for amateur ensembles.



Pancho Vladigerov (1899-1978) was born in Zürich, Switzerland. His father was Bulgarian, his mother Russian. Vladigerov played the piano and composed from an early age. After his family moved back to Bulgaria, he was eventually sent to Berlin to study which he did with Paul Juon, Friedrich Gernsheim and Georg Schumann. He is generally regarded as Bulgaria's most important composer. He wrote one string quartet.

The **String Quartet Op.34** dates from 1940. It combines late German Romanticism from Wagner and Richard Strauss with elements of French Impressionism and Bulgarian folk music. The opening movement Grave, allegro con brio, is upbeat, lively and very attractive. Here and there are echoes of Ravel. Tremolo often creates a sense of drama. The second movement, Andante doloroso, begins very quietly and stays that way for quite a while nor does any real theme appear until a brief tremolo introduces it. The music is neither funereal or dolorous. Rather there is calm, reflective melancholy mood throughout. The dynamics never get very loud. Third is a modern, almost American sounding Scherzo vivace, very appealing. The finale, Grave, allegro con fuoco starts with a loud, orchestral burst of tremolo and heavy double stopped chords. Gradually the tempo picks up. I would not describe this Allegro as fiery, but rather jocular and genial. This is rather a good work, strong enough for concert and which can also be recommended to amateurs.



Wilhelm Volckmar (1812-1887) was born in the German town of Hersfeld. He received much of his musical training from his father, Adam Volckmar, who was a prominent organist. Wilhelm went on to be one of the great organ virtuosi of the 19th century and spent his life both teaching and touring. He also authored several books on music theory that were well received. Most of his compositions are for the organ, however, he did write three string quartets, his Op.58, which date from 1861. I am only familiar with second of the set.

His **String Quartet in G Major, Op.58 No.2** opens with an Adagio introduction which has the air of the Baroque, and which leads to an upbeat and energetic Allegro moderato. The second movement, Andantino, is a theme and set of four variations. Next comes a bumptious Scherzo. The work concludes with a dignified, classical Allegro, full of drive. This is an excellent choice for an amateur or student quartet looking for a concert or competition work. It is well-written with good parts for all

Robert Volkmann (1815-1883) was almost an exact contemporary of Wagner, however, he certainly did not tread the same path as his fellow countryman. Volkmann forever kept Beethoven in front of him as his model although he was later to fall under the sway of Mendelssohn and then Schumann. Volkmann's music



was regularly compared to and considered the equal of Schumann or Mendelssohn. Though born and schooled in Germany, he studied at Freiburg & Leipzig, Volkmann, after a brief stint in Prague, got a job in Pest in 1841 and made friends among the large German community there. Though he went to Vienna in 1854, he missed Pest and moved back in 1858 where he remained for the rest of his

life. He wrote six string quartets.

Like Beethoven, Volkmann waited until after he was 30 to pen a string quartet. His **String Quartet No.1 in a minor, Op.9** was composed in 1847-8 during his first sojourn in Pest, but not published until he moved to Vienna in 1854. It was actually composed a few months after what later became his second quartet, but it found a publisher before that work. Regarded as modern-sounding at the time, today it does not sound so to us, but one should keep in mind that it was published when Brahms was but 21 and Schumann still alive. The slow introduction of the Largo-Allegro non troppo is reminiscent of middle or even late Beethoven structurally with its long silences. After it fades away *ppp*, without warning the Allegro opens *f* and moves forward with tremendous energy and drama. The center of gravity in this quartet is clearly in the mammoth Adagio molto which is longer than the third and fourth movements together. It begins in 3/4 and the first subject, which is of great simplicity and is made to sound, through the use of triplets like a slow-motion minuet. But what develops is of considerable complexity, not only rhythmically but thematically as well. The second half of the movement involves the slow but steady building of tension to a great pitch which is only dissipated by a lengthy silence followed by a soft recitativo for the first violin before fading away *pppp*. The Presto is especially captivating, a headlong gallop which only stops for breath in a somewhat slower and more lyrical middle section. In the finale, Allegro impetuoso, one hears echoes of Beethoven, especially in the opening sustained notes, but the writing is pure Volkmann. This outstanding quartet presents no great technical demands on the players. An excellent concert choice, it should be in the repertoire. Highly recommended to amateur players.

Volkmann's **String Quartet No.2 in g minor, Op.14** also dates from 1854. It was dedicated to the Hellmesberger Quartet of Vienna, perhaps at the time, the most famous in Europe. They quickly made the work well-known throughout Central Europe and a reputation for its composer. From the opening measures of the Allegro con spirito the listener is taken by the throat. The drive and dramatic thrust of the thematic material never lets up from start to finish in this extraordinary movement. A charming Andante, said to be based on the German folksong, Kommt a Vogerl geflogen, (comes a little bird a flying) follows. It is, without so being marked, a set of six variations. A superb Scherzo, Allegro moto comes next. Marked in 6/8, in reality it must be played in 2. There is a short slower section, marked meno, which appears twice, the last time just before the end where it is truncated without warning by an a tempo con fuoco. Really quite outstanding in everyway. The Andantino-Allegro energico-Presto is a fairly large movement and actually gives the impression of being two, if not three movements. The Andantino is by way of introduction and begins with a leisurely viola solo. The Allegro energico lives up to its name and is forceful and full of passion. There is no real development but a very starkly contrasting interlude tonally and thematically. It is a kind intermezzo before the storm, a Presto, used as a coda, is introduced and hurls the Quartet to its thrilling finish. This is a masterwork. It deserves public performance and belongs in the repertoire as much as any of the Mendelssohns. Also warmly recommended to amateurs.

Today, most Germans, upon hearing the opening bars to Volkmann's **String Quartet No.3 in G Major, Op.34** might say, "Oh he used the melody from Silcher's famous Lorelei Song," but they would be wrong. When the similarity was pointed out to

him many years later, he told a well-known music critic that he was unfamiliar with the Silcher song. Could this possibly be? According to the music scholar, Max Friedländer, no less than 10 pieces were published prior to Silcher's with this melody, including one for the piano by the 14 year old Beethoven. Further more, the Lorelei Song did not become well-known throughout Germany until around Bismarck's unification in 1871 so Volkmann living in Hapsburg Hungary might well not have heard of it in 1857 at the time he composed this work. In what is, for the most part, a satisfactory if overly long movement, there are some very fussy rhythmic patterns which, besides their unnecessary difficulty, add nothing. The second movement, Andante con moto, is based on a plain but pretty theme and to me seems better executed. The music has charm and the writing is good throughout. Volkmann follows this up with a quick movement which is neither scherzo nor minuet but simply an Allegro con spirito. It's construction is similar to the last movement of the Second Quartet in that the contrasting section is a short intermezzo whose purpose seems to be to relieve the tension. It is used a second time to bring the movement to a soft and uneventful conclusion. The Quartet is rounded out by an Allegretto sostenuto which despite a few dramatic moments is, though pleasing, strangely devoid of either excitement or any sense of finality. This work is softer and more reflective than his earlier ones. Although I do not think it is strong enough to justify concert performance, nonetheless, it can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in e minor, Op.35 was composed in Vienna sometime in 1858 not long after his third quartet. It makes a more lasting impression on the listener and overall seems to exhibit better mastery of form than the Third. The first subject of the opening Allegro comodo, is more in the order of a drawing-room romance, beautiful, almost painfully so. The Scherzo which follows is superb. Taking his quartets as whole, it would not be an exaggeration to note that Volkmann seemed to excel at writing clever, exciting and memorable scherzi. Played in one, it is a headlong. Probably the finest movement in the Quartet, it should be noted that this scherzo was not written at the same time as other movements but was composed 27 years earlier and constitutes the only surviving movement of a very early quartet, the rest of which Volkmann destroyed. A muted Andantino in 5 sharps follows. It is short, uncomplicated and reflective in mood. The finale, Allegretto Vivace, is an interesting movement, if for no other reason than it quotes both Beethoven and Smetana. A sort of 'laid-back' or relaxed moto perpetuo, it is nonetheless quite captivating with some rather dramatic moments. A clearly identifiable snippet to the first movement of Beethoven's Op.18 No.4 can be heard twice as can a very dramatic theme which Smetana used more than twenty years later in his first Aus Mein Leben quartet. This is not a hard quartet to play, very straight forward. Certainly, it can be recommended to amateurs who would enjoy it and for the occasional concert performance.

The most striking, unique and powerful of Volkmann's six quartets is, in my opinion, his **String Quartet No.5 in f minor, Op. 37**. It was written in 1859, a year after Nos. 3 & 4, and upon Volkmann's return to Pest after nearly five years in Vienna. Formally, it is only in three movements, which, for the time, is in itself quite unusual. A quick glance at the opening Allegro easily gives a clear idea of the extraordinary force with which this work literally explodes. The part writing for all four instruments is masterful with a resultant full-bodied and rich sound, verging almost on the orchestral. A peaceful Adagio in D flat comes next. In the final movement, initially marked Allegro energico, Volkmann actually creates two, if not three movements. At first, the movement veers off in the fashion of a scherzo, a driving, powerful movement in 3/4 time of the sort one finds in Beethoven's middle period. The Allegro literally runs itself down into a very beautiful contrasting Andantino which cleverly makes use of the first theme from the Allegro while, at the same time, chang-

ing it into something totally different in mood. This, in effect, is the trio to the de facto scherzo. It, in turn, is superseded by an Allegro molto, a Presto and a Prestissimo. And when its all over, both the audience and the players will be out of breath. As to difficulty, the first movement makes considerable ensemble demands on the players and also requires a sure technical execution by all four. Experienced amateurs, however, who are accomplished players should have no problems. This quartet qualifies for the sobriquet of masterwork. It should be in the repertoire and is an excellent choice for concert

Volkmann's **Quartet No.6 in E flat Major, Op.43**, was published in 1863. It, too, is a very fine work. The opening Allegro con brio begins with what one writer has styled a 'typical Mannheim Rocket,' and is followed by the syncopated melody of the first subject which is definitely Hungarian in flavor: The Larghetto which follows is sweet and unassuming except for the animated middle section in which the 1st violin, given a near concerto-like part, breaks loose. The Scherzo which follows is in 5/4 time, one of the earliest examples of the meter in the literature. Though wonderfully crafted, Volkmann was nonetheless roundly attacked for seeking out the unusual and contorted in rhythm. Even the trio keeps the meter in what is a first-rate movement by anyone's standards. A brief Andantino leads to the big finale, Molto vivace, featuring a rousing finish. Again this belongs in the concert hall. Amateurs will need a strong 1st violinist.



Ignatz Waghalter (1881-1949) was born in Warsaw into a family of musicians. His talent showed itself early and he was something of a prodigy on the violin and piano. After studying with his parents, he went to Berlin where he continued studies with Joseph Joachim, Philipp Scharwenka and then Friedrich Gernsheim. He also studied conducting and worked as an understudy for Arthur Nikisch, then one of the most

famous living conductors. He, himself, was to become a leading opera conductor as well as a composer of several successful operas. He wrote one string quartet.

The **String Quartet in D Major, Op.3** dates from around 1903 shortly after he completed his studies with Gernsheim and received considerable acclaim from critics, including Joseph Joachim whose quartet performed the work in Berlin. The thematic material demonstrates a natural feeling for the string quartet and he was able to write easily for it. In the main, the opening movement, Allegro moderato, is bright and sunny with pleasing melodies. The impressive second movement, Allegretto, is a cross between an intermezzo, a scherzo and a serenade which is wonderful to hear. Next comes a deeply felt Adagio ma non troppo mesto with long-lined themes. The finale, Allegretto, is a theme and excellent set of eight variations. Strong enough for concert performance and it can be warmly recommended to amateurs.



William Walton (1902-1983) was born in the English town of Oldham, the son of a musician. He studied piano, voice and composition at Christ Church College, Oxford. He wrote two string quartets. The first was an atonal work written while he was a student at Oxford. It was performed in Salzburg in 1923 and impressed Anton Webern and Arnold Schoenberg. Nonetheless, Walton withdrew the work.

His **String Quartet in a minor** dates from 1947. Though a key signature is given, the quartet really has no tonal base. The first of the quartet's four movements, Allegro, is searching, the thematic material is fluid, at times quite lyrical at other times somewhat harsh and almost violent. There are also hints of the late Romantic movement. Second comes a Presto. There is little in the way of thematic material, it is mostly rhythm and not en-

tirely convincing. It could serve as film music. A slow movement, Lento, is placed third. The viola presents a rather flaccid theme. For a long time little happens. The finale, Poco a poco piu animato, begins rather slowly, again not much is happening for a long time. You could doze off waiting for the main section which angular, thrusting and nervous. I found this work contrived, forced and with no real sense of cohesion. I cannot recommend it.



The musical reputation of **Carl Maria von Weber** (1786-1826) rests almost entirely on his famous operas *Die Freischutz* and *Oberon* and a few other works such as his clarinet concertos. But Weber's music by and large is unknown to present day players and listeners, which is a pity since it is uniformly well-written. Weber studied with Michael Haydn in Salzburg the Abbe Vogler in Vienna, two of the leading teachers of their day. He pursued a career as a conductor and music director holding posts in Breslau, Prague, Berlin and Dresden.

He did not write any real string quartets although he arranged his **Six Ecossaises**. Despite its name, the Ecossaise, or Schottisch as it was called in German, almost certainly is not of Scottish origin, but most likely originated in either France or Germany as an imitation of Scottish airs. The Ecossaise, in this guise, is a lively dance usually in 2/4 time. During the first two decades of the 19th century it became highly popular in the dance halls of Europe. Composers such as Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin and Weber wrote stylized versions of the Ecossaise, which is characterized by its use of dynamic contrast with fortissimos and pianissimos coming very close after each other. Weber's Six Ecossaises, an early work, were originally composed for the piano in 1802. Weber, who was then only 16, dedicated them significantly to the "fair sex of Hamburg." At that time, every well brought up young lady could play the piano and it was for them that these charming dances were no doubt intended. They immediately achieved wide popularity and Weber's publishers insisted he produce them in arrangements for string quartet, piano trio, and even orchestra as well as several other combinations. The original, because of the interesting writing for the left hand, lent itself to arrangements for string quartet or chamber orchestra. They are mentioned here because they are very appealing, fun to play can be used as an encore or short program work in concert



Joseph Miroslav Weber (1854-1906) was born in Prague. He studied violin and organ there and enjoyed a career as a solo violinist and conductor, holding posts in Thuringia, Prague, Wiesbaden and Munich. Weber's chamber music was highly valued by his peers as witnessed by the prizes so many famous composers and teachers awarded to it. He appears to have composed two string quartets, the

first seems to have disappeared.

His **String Quartet No.2 in b minor** was awarded first prize at the St Petersburg International String Quartet Competition by Tchaikovsky, Nápravník and Rimsky-Korsakov. They were not wrong. This is an outstanding string quartet. Though he lived in Germany for much of his life, the quartet is filled with Bohemian melodies. As a violinist, he knew how to write for string instruments and the parts are grateful to play and do not presenting the players with any great technical difficulties. The first movement, Allegretto, is highly poetic replete with lovely Slavic melodies that are quite attractive. This is followed by a pleasing Minuetto moderato. The style could be called rococo but as updated by a late romantic composer. The third movement, Comodo, is an atmospheric and attractive Czech elegy. The short fiery middle section provides an excellent contrast. The main subject of the

finale, *Allegro furioso*, is characterized by its Czech rhythms. The theme itself is presented in the form of a fugue. There are two beautiful lyrical melodies which appear in the movement's development. The effective coda reintroduces first theme to conclude. It is the equal of Dvorak's late quartets and deserves to be heard in concert and amateurs should certainly take note of it.



Anton Webern (1883-1945), of course, is well-known and needs little introduction as one of the founding fathers of the Second Vienna School and leading proponents of the 12 tone system. However, what is not well-known is that he did write at least two short *tonal* movements for string quartet.

The **Langsamer Satz** (Slow Movement) dates from 1905 and was said to have been inspired by a hiking holiday in the mountains outside of Vienna Webern took with his soon to be fiancée and later wife. He intended to write an entire quartet but put it aside after completing this one movement. Not surprisingly, the *Langsamer Satz* is a highly charged work, clearly rooted in post-Brahmsian romanticism and tonality. A medium length quartet movement, the *Langsamer Satz* expresses a plethora of emotions from yearning to dramatic turmoil to a tranquil peaceful denouement. It shows that Webern, like Schönberg and Berg, was capable of writing very fine music in a tonal idiom if he chose. This work is a little masterpiece, suitable as an encore for professional groups but still within easy reach of competent amateurs.

The **Rondo** dates from 1906 and was intended to be part of a quartet that Webern never completed. Already, we can hear that Webern is pushing the traditional tonal boundaries to their limits while still staying within them. Much of his later style can already be heard in this work, with its original treatment and emphasis on the effects of pizzicato, ponticello, harmonics and combinations of these to create unusual tone color. The movement has, for its main theme, an elegant, lilting, Viennese waltz-like subject. Webern combines subtlety with episodes of adventurous experimentation throughout this engaging work. This could also be used as an encore or very short program work. Experienced amateurs can manage it.



Werner Wehrli (1892-1944) was born in the Swiss town of Aarau. His main music studies were in Basel with Hans Huber and Hermann Suter. He pursued a career as a teacher mostly in his home town. His marriage to a singer influenced his compositions which were mainly for voice in one form or another. However, he did write a fair amount of chamber music, including three string quartets. He was considered one of Switzerland's leading composers between the two world wars. I am not familiar with his first string quartet.

His **String Quartet No.2 in G, Op.8** won the Frankfurt Mozart Foundation's first prize beating out the works of several better-known composers including Hindemith. Poco Adagio is the misleading tempo to the first movement which in actuality is at times fast, at times moderate but not particularly slow. The tonalities show the influence of Richard Strauss. This is a hard movement to describe. It alternates between emotionally charged episodes and nearly total limpness. The next movement, *Allegro vivo*, begins slowly but picks up speed. It is a dance-like serenade. The third movement, *Un poco animato*, allegro moderato, is, from the standpoint of tempo, all over the place. Occasionally very lyrical, the writing is primarily neo-classical idiom; although sometimes harsh, the music is always tonal. The finale, *Vivacissimo* brings back, a la Wagner, the themes from earlier movements. The integration of these ideas is excellent. This is, for the most part, an effective work, however, there does not seem to be

much contrast between the movements in that there is rarely a tempo that is kept constant for more than fifteen seconds. This coupled with the way themes are constantly interrupted in mid-iteration, creates a lack of smoothness and tends to kill what emotional strength the writing has. Still, all things considered, there is much to like here and an occasional concert performance is warranted. Experienced amateurs will also enjoy the work.

His **String Qt. No.3 in B, Op.37** from the opening notes of the first movement, marked *Bewegte Viertel*, shows a very wayward tonality. While not atonal, this is probably Wehrli's most experimental sounding work. Written in 1933, the themes are abstract and not always easy to grasp without considerable concentration. The second movement, *Fliessend*, with its pizzicato effects is more approachable and interesting. The writing seems more effective. A Choral: *Langsam* serves as a third movement and is desolate and bleak, the mood descriptive of the dead lying on fields after some battle. The finale, *Fuge*, is angular and powerful. Not as appealing as No.2 but interesting enough to be heard in concert. Not an easy work for amateurs.



Karl Weigl (1881-1949) was born in Vienna. He was educated at the University of Vienna and the Conservatory of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*. He also studied with Zemlinsky, who was a family friend. Although he never chose to pursue twelve-tone composition, Weigl nevertheless became friends with both Webern and Schönberg. In 1903, the three of them founded the *Vereinigung schaffender Tonkünstler* which dedicated itself to presenting concerts of important modern works including those of Mahler, Richard Strauss, Reger, Pfitzner, Schönberg, Zemlinsky and Weigl. Most, if not all, of his peers held a very high opinion of his compositions. Mahler, for example, introduced the young composer to Arnold Rosé, concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic and leader of the famed Rosé Quartet, which went on to premiere many of Weigl's chamber works. In the realm of chamber music, the excellence of Weigl's compositions was publicly recognized as evidenced by the fact that in 1910, he won the prestigious Beethoven Prize for his String Quartet No.3. By 1929, Weigl was Lecturer in Harmony and Counterpoint at the University of Vienna. Of contemporary composers, his compositions, at least in the German-speaking world, were among the most frequently performed. Pablo Casals wrote "*Karl Weigl's music will not be lost. We will return to it after the storm has passed. We will return to those who have written real music.*" To this Arnold Schönberg, writing in 1938, added, "*I always considered [Karl] Weigl as one of the best composers of the old school; one of those who continued the glittering Viennese tradition. He truly preserves this old culture of musical spirit which represents the best of Viennese culture.*" Yet, despite these and similar letters of recommendation from Richard Strauss, Bruno Walter and others, Weigl immediately plunged into obscurity barely able to make ends meet when, in 1938, he fled his native Austria and emigrated to the United States. Eventually, he secured a teaching post at the Hart School of Music and later served as head of the theory department at the New England Conservatory. In no small part, the Second World War permanently swept away what had, up until then, been a prominent European, if not international, reputation. He wrote eight string quartets. String Quartet No.2 which has a *viola d'amore* was never published. Neither was No.4 subtitle *Requiem for Eva*, nor No.6. As of 2023 Nos. 7 and 8 had not been published. They were recorded for the first time in 2017.

His **String Quartet No.1 in c, Op.20** was written on a titanic scale, like a Mahler symphony. In a letter to Arnold Rosé, dating from 1904, Schönberg wrote, "*I want to most warmly recommend a young and highly talented composer, Karl Weigl. He has composed a string quartet of extraordinary qualities. I believe a*

performance of this work, because of its inventiveness and well-crafted nature, would, without question, be justified and rewarding.” Despite such strong praise, the Rosé Quartet never got around to performing it. It was not premiered until 1925. The first movement *Allegro con fuoco*—*Stürmisch bewegt* is, as the title suggests, full of fire and fury, but there are also long calm episodes between the storms. The idiom is post-Brahms, late-romantic. The music is fresh and original. A big *Adagio, sehr langsam*, requires the listener to pay close attention in order to grasp the musical ideas of this very finely crafted movement. In the third movement, *Wild und bacchantisch*—*furioso*, the music does not quite live up to the overblown title, although there is nothing wrong with this genial scherzo which has an excellently contrasting and mysterious trio section. The final movement, *Andante moderato*—*sehr langsam*, is quiet and elegiac. Weigl makes clear to the overall mood with which he wishes to leave the listener by closing with an uncompromisingly slow movement. There is a stillness, a peacefulness one often hears in the slow movements of a Bruckner symphony. This Quartet undoubtedly belongs in the front rank of early 20th century works and should surely be part of the standard repertoire. Professionals will add it to their repertoire and bring it back into the concert hall where it belongs. Only for experienced amateur players.

String Quartet No.3 in A Major, Op.4 was composed in 1909. The opus number of Weigl's compositions are fairly meaningless. His String Quartet No.1 carries the number Op.20 but was definitely written before the String Quartet No.3. This quartet, while expanding the tonalities of the late Romantic style, never breaks the bounds of tonality. The opening movement, *Innig bewegt*, tonally bears a resemblance to Hugo Wolf's Italian Serenade. A sweet, lilting Viennese melody is mixed with unusual rhythmic cadences. The rhythmically potent second movement, *Kraftig bewegt*, serves as the scherzo. Energetic and thrusting, the music is quite original and certainly seizes and holds one's attention. *Sehr langsam*, is introspective and melancholy but not tragic. Here, Weigl takes Bruckner's tonalities as his starting point. In the extraordinarily powerful finale, *Stürmisch*, Weigl takes the opening notes to the final movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony as his motif and main theme and turns them into a remarkable adventure. This, too, is one of the most significant and important string quartets of the early 20th century and is another work professionals should add to their repertoire. It can be managed by experienced and technically competent players.

String Quartet No.5 in G, Op.31 is also a very large work dating from 1925. The opening movement, *Sehr ruhig*—*Moderato*, is clearly informed by Weigl's revisit of past Viennese masters. Critics were quick to note a certain Schubertian quality to the music and it is definitely there, albeit alongside the influence of Hugo Wolf and certain 20th Century developments. Weigl's creed was summed up in his answer to Schönberg's criticism that Weigl had not proceeded beyond tonality. “*As soon as a new form or means of expression is found, any number of fanatics stand up to proclaim the exclusivity of the new art form...but new means of expression does not make all former ones obsolete. Additionally, what matters is whether someone has something new to say and that he does it in a form which is mostly his own, in other words, a vivid form. Finally, one must never copy someone else but rather expression should come partly from one's inner development and partly from the absorption of outside influences.*” Although marked, *sehr ruhig*, there are several boisterous interludes. The clever second movement, a scherzo, *Allegro molto*, is frenetic but also has a burlesque quality to it along with a lyrical trio section. A subdued *Larghetto* follows. The finale, *Allegro comodo*, begins by building to a harsh dissonant chord one note at a time, sounding rather like music from a horror movie, but the dissonance is quickly dissolved by a bright, playful theme with which the rest of the movement is concerned. This is very attractive contemporary music. This quartet is also an im-

portant work which should be heard in concert, but is within the reach of good amateurs.



Kurt Weill (1900-50) is well-known for his Three Penny Opera and Mahogony, but decidedly not string quartets. He did however, write two.

The first, **String Quartet No.1 in b minor** composed in 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 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, *Mäßig*, 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 lens 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 diffuseness one often encounters in Reger's chamber works. It is an engaging and valuable work and deserving of public performance.

Weill's **String Quartet No.2, Op.8** was composed in 1923 five years later while he was completing his studies with Busoni. It is often mistakenly called No.1 since not many people are familiar with his first quartet. 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. Its opening movement, *Introduktion, sostenuto con molto 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. I cannot recommend the work either for concert or home.

Leó Weiner (1885-1960) was born in Budapest and began by studying the piano as a youngster. In 1901 he entered the Budapest Academy of Music and studied composition with Hans Koessler. His rise was meteoric and he was widely regarded as a



"wunderkind", winning virtually all of the important Hungarian and Austrian competitions between 1903 and 1908. Critics dubbed him the "Hungarian Mendelssohn," not because he sounded like that composer, but simply because his excellence showed itself at such a young age. Weiner was essentially a Romantic composer, with his roots in late German Romanticism. His compositions, though certainly featuring modern touches, never ventured

into either polytonalism or atonalism. Understandably then, until after the First World War, he and his music were far better known than that of his two now world famous contemporaries Bartok and Kodaly. But as the modern trends pioneered by Stravinsky, Bartok and Schonberg began to come into vogue, Weiner's reputation and that of his music slowly receded, as did the music of other contemporary composers who remained faithful to traditional tonality. He wrote four works for string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major, Op.4 was composed in 1906, predating the first efforts of Kodaly and Bartok by many years. At its premiere, a leading Budapest music critic wrote, *"The nation must honor this 21 year old master as an innovator of Hungarian music. Though he deftly respects tradition, he has an individual voice of his own. However, it is futile to look for any references to folk music, although the heroic moving voice is quite Hungarian in its tone. There are certain Hungarian motifs in his melodic and rhythmical structures..."* The first movement, Allegro, is idyllic and pastoral. It has a sprightly, simple main theme of a folkloric nature first given out by the second violin. A rubato section has a definite Hungarian aura to it. The second movement, Allegretto vivo e grazioso is a scherzo. There are several themes but the dominant theme is a lively dance-like rhythm. The trio provides an excellent contrast. In the dignified third movement, Andante espressivo, the recurrent sets of three 16th notes, almost sounding as triplets, give the touching lyric melody, which serves as the main theme, an almost tragic quality. The finale, Allegro molto vivace, is very original and full of colorful tonal effects. The movement opens with a few bars of 20th century urban angst before the upbeat and attractive main theme begins in the fifth measure. This is a first rate quartet which certainly deserves concert performance and should be manageable by accomplished and experienced amateurs.

Weiner waited fifteen years before writing another quartet. Part of the wait was of course due to the First World War and its aftermath in which the Habsburg empire of Austria-Hungary was dismantled. It was only in 1921 that he produced his **String Quartet No.2 in f sharp minor, Op.13**. In 1922, the year after Weiner composed this work, it won the prestigious Coolidge Prize for Chamber Music. The opening movement begins with a slow, somber, even gloomy Lento which proves to be an introduction of substantial length. Eventually it softly dies away and is followed suddenly by two loud chords and quick chromatic passages which herald the arrival of the Allegro with its powerful, post-romantic theme deep in the cello's lowest registers. The second movement, Molto vivace, is a nervous, modern scherzo. Full of energy, the music is always moving forward. One critic called it a witty French dance conjuring up images of little devils running about. The tricky syncopation of the main theme against a continuous stream of rushing 16th note triplets make the movement somewhat difficult to keep together. The lovely, but questioning, main theme to the slow movement, Andante, follows the scherzo without pause. The mood is reflective and a bit mysterious. The lilting finale, Allegro con anima, is, dance-like and graceful. Good for concert and very accomplished amateurs.

Again a long period elapsed before Weiner returned to the string quartet. The **Divertimento No.2, Op.24a** was composed in two versions, the original for string quartet and a second version for string orchestra. It dates from 1938, Weiner's so-called second

or middle period. In the earlier works, Weiner was influenced by the Romantic composers but wrote in a post-romantic style. Then, in the second period, unwilling to abandon tonality, but feeling that the time for post-romanticism was finished, he devoted himself, much like Bartok and Kodaly had earlier, to investigating and using original Hungarian folk melodies. The Divertimento consists of four movements, each based on a different folk melody. The first is entitled Wedding March, Tempo di csardas. It is based on a Verbunkos, and a close relative to the famous Hungarian recruiting marches in spirit. It is lively and full of élan. The second movement, hard to translate is perhaps best put as, Teasing Pranks. Though marked Allegro scherzando, the mood of the main section is that of an intermezzo, while the trio section, usually slower, here is quicker. The very short third movement, Lament, is an Andante sostenuto. The title expresses the emotion. But it is really nothing more than a brief interlude whose purpose seems, like that of a sorbet, to separate two entries, in this case the scherzo and the finale. The finale bears the title The Jovial Shepherd and is based on a well-known Hungarian folk song, Simon has gone a stealing pigs, but although it is exotic-sounding and exciting, it is fair to say that the music does not conjure up any image of pig stealing. It is an unrelieved whirling dance which brings the Divertimento to a close. This is entertaining music which would be good in concert and is not hard to play so can be recommended to amateurs.

A few months after finishing the lighter Divertimento, Weiner wrote another work for string quartet, **String Quartet No.3 in G Major, Op.26**. It is in three movements and neither as massive nor as ambitious as his first two quartets. The opening movement, Pastorale, though lyrical, is also light and airy. The main theme found in the first violin strong reminds one of birdsong. To be sure, there are several episodes of dissonance but overall traditional tonality, albeit of a modern nature, is maintained. The second movement, Fantasy, bears the tempo marking Poco adagio. There is a pentatonic tonality which reminds one of Vaughan Williams. The main theme is dreamy and wandering. The lively finale is a Fugue based on an old Hungarian folk melody. It is first given out by the second violin. The tonality here is more traditional and less adventurous in that Weiner has cleansed the music of all dissonance. While none of the three string quartets are beyond good level and experience amateur players, the first and third are more accessible from a tonal standpoint. Like the first quartet, this one is more accessible than the second quartet which is not all that easy to put together. This is another solid work, good for concert and for home.



Felix Weingartner (1863-1942) was born in Zara, Dalmatia, today's Zadar, Croatia, to Austrian parents. In 1883, he went to the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied composition with Carl Reinecke. He also studied privately with Franz Liszt in Weimar. Weingartner was one of the most famous and successful conductors of his time, holding positions in Hamburg, Mannheim, Danzig, Munich, Berlin and Vienna, where he succeeded Gustav Mahler as Director of the Imperial Opera. Despite his demanding career as a conductor, Weingartner, like Mahler, thought of himself equally as a composer and devoted considerable time to composition. He wrote several symphonies, numerous operas, some instrumental concertos, and a considerable amount of chamber music, including five string quartets, a piano sextet and a string quintet. Weingartner's style shows the influence of Wagner and combines late Romanticism with early Modernism. It can be said to share a great deal in common with the music of such contemporaries as Richard Strauss and Mahler.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.24 was composed in 1898. Written in excellent quartet style, it plays very well. The

opening bars to the first movement, *Allegro moderato*, quote Schubert's famous *Death & the Maiden* string quartet. This was no accident as the work was occasioned by two deaths, the first of the child of a close friend, the second of Otto von Bismarck, whom Weingartner greatly respected as the man who had unified Germany. This serious movement is highly effective because of the excellent contrast between the themes. In the second movement, *Adagio assai*, we hear echoes from the *Adagio* of Beethoven's *Op.18 No.2*. A powerful scherzo, *Allegro molto*, follows. It has a particularly striking trio section with exotic tonal coloring. The finale, *Introduzione Tema con variazione*, begins with an introduction recalling the thematic material of the first movement before a very appealing theme makes its appearance. It is followed by several clever and well-executed variations, including an exceptional fugue, marked *Allegro inflammato e deciso*. This work unquestionably belongs in the concert hall. It can, perhaps, be called a masterwork. Manageable by good amateur players.

String Quartet No.2 in f minor, Op.26 was published in 1900. It is unquestionably a very powerful work. The outer movements are so animated and dramatic that they all but eclipse the middle movements. The powerful energy of the opening movement, *Allegro deciso*, recalls the opening movement of Beethoven's own quartet in f minor, *Op.95*. The highly original second movement, *Allegretto quasi scherzando*, creates an otherworldly atmosphere through the use of exotic tonal effects such as *ponticello* bowing and the interesting use of *pizzicato*. The very expressive trio section provides a marvelous contrast to the scherzo. Next comes a *Fantasia—Adagio cantabile, non troppo lento*. Lyrical and highly expressive, the first violin is given the lead throughout in what might be styled an instrumental aria. The exciting finale, *Vivace furioso*, is inspiring and original and leaves a deep impression. This is a masterwork but it must be said that this is a work which will be beyond amateur players except those of the highest technical level.

String Quartet No.3 in F Major, Op.34 dates from 1903 and was a present to his second wife, Feodora. This is important because one can clearly identify a "Feodora" theme. The first two tones of the quartet begin with an F and an E followed by C (the "do" of the scale) then there is D (Re of the scale) followed by an A. The theme can be heard in various guises throughout the work. The opening measures to the first movement, *Allegro comodo*, clearly evoke the spirit of Beethoven. One hears vague echoes of themes from *Op.18 No.2 (The Compliment)*, *Op.74 (The Harp)* and from introductions of several of the Late Quartets. Then there is the violence which recalls the powerful second movement of Schubert's last quartet. But all of this is presented in a most original and captivating fashion that is in no way imitative. The middle movement, *Allegro molto*, is an exciting scherzo. We are taking a wild horse ride across an open varied countryside, as the rhythmic power of the music impels us ever forward. Along the way we are treated to some very adventurous, and for the time, daring post romantic era tonalities. Against this, Weingartner juxtaposes a very languid and melancholy trio section. The finale, *Poco adagio, Allegro giocoso*, begins with a lengthy slow and sad introduction. From this, the allegro slowly pokes its face forth, gradually gaining momentum as it heads to its first triumphant and joyful climax. Again adventurous tonalities are wonderfully mixed with the traditional. This is a masterwork, a highly individual and original work of the first order from the important transitional era of Romanticism to Modernism. Warmly recommended to professionals as well as amateurs who are both experienced ensemble players and technically very accomplished.

Fifteen years and a World War separate that work from **String Quartet No.4 in D Major, Op.62**, which appeared in 1918. Nonetheless, this quartet shows many of the same characteristics of the preceding ones and tonally is in no way more advanced than the earlier quartets. However, one major difference between

this quartet and his others is that it lacks the explosive power and extraordinary dramatic episodes of the earlier works. Instead, here we find a charming and elegant work. The main theme of the opening movement, *Allegro grazioso*, is dominated by its rhythmic figures while the charming and playful second theme is quite catchy and reminds one of something that could have been used in a cowboy Western movie. The following *Elegy, Andante con poco moto*, is everything that such a movement should be emotive, somewhat sad and reflective, the writing is superb. The third movement, *Allegro vivo*, is a playful romp dominated by its offbeat rhythms and his very effective use of both *pizzicato* and *ponticello*. A highly chromatic and somewhat wayward trio section provides good contrast, serves as a scherzo. The trio makes a strong impression and contrast with its warm melody. The finale, *Vivace assai*, both in spirit and tonality has a rather classical aura to it. It sounds what Mozart might have written had he been living in the first decade of the 20th century, combining clever playfulness with lovely melody. Of its type, this is a very fine work which is within the technical range of most experienced amateur players. Both of these works are first rate and deserve concert performance where they would be sure to make a strong impression. A fine work which deserves concert performance and can be warmly recommended to amateurs

String Quartet No.5 in E flat Major, Op.81 dates from 1920. The opening *Allegro* begins with a short quick, galloping passage twice and each time followed by a slower diffident section. Then the music breaks loose in orchestral fashion. Then there is a long, lovely cello solo. Throughout it all, one gets the impression that the music is more suited to a symphonic treatment than one of chamber music. Second is an *Andante con moto*. It is quiet, reflective and valedictory. The *Molto vivace* which follows sounds like something Mendelssohn might have written had he been alive in 1930. There is a lot of bustle and movement but the thematic material is surprisingly thin. The finale, *Presto*, is a jovial, apparently based on a folk melody of some sort. Again, the music sounds more suited to a symphonic performance. Although this is a solid work, it is not up to the standard of the first four. Additionally, the thematic material which is presented in riveting fashion in the first four quartets is not in this quartet and not particularly memorable. And it is not all that easy to play. And surprisingly, it sounds like it could have been written in the 1880s. For all of these reasons, I see no reason recommend it, especially in view of the fact that his first four quartets are so fine.



Max von Weinzierl (1841-1898) was born in the Bohemian town of Bergstadt. He began his studies in Prague but moved to Vienna in 1858 where he studied cello and composition at the Conservatory of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*. After graduating, he served as a theater director at some Vienna's most important theaters and also worked as the director of Vienna's famous Men's

Choir. Most of his compositions are choral works.

Nachtstück for String Quartet Op.34 was originally written for four violas or three violas and cello and published in 1883. However, Weinzierl's publisher realized that this beautiful work would only enjoy a very limited audience and sales in this format and therefore insisted that Weinzierl also create version for standard string quartet. This version was published a few months after the 4 viola version. The work was dedicated to his friend Dr. Wenzel Sedlitzky who served as President of the *Mozarteum* in Salzburg during the late 1880's and may have been instrumental in Weinzierl deciding to write such a work. Some sources indicate that Sedlitzky asked for a work that could be played by multiple violists to be used at the *Mozarteum*. The work is in three contrasting sections. Very effective, good for concert and experienced amateur players.



Julius Weismann (1879–1950) was born in the German city of Freiburg. He studied at the Royal Bavarian Conservatory with Josef Rheinberger and Ludwig Thuille as well as with Heinrich von Herzogenberg in Berlin. He pursued a career as a composer, conductor and teacher. He composed in most genres and was particularly fond of chamber music, leaving 11



Richard Wetz (1875-1935) was born in the then German town of Gleiwitz in Silesia. He studied with Richard Hoffmann in Leipzig and Ludwig Thuille in Munich. He eventually settled in the city of Erfurt where he taught at the Conservatory. He composed in most genres. Despite the fact that when his music was heard in concert, it was uniformly praised, neither he nor his music ever became particularly well-

known. This was in large part due to the fact that Wetz chose to remain in the provincial city of Erfurt rather than moving to Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich or any other large musical metropolis, despite many offers, and which would have ensured that he became better known. He wrote two string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.14 was composed in 1905 and published the next year. It is a work which is grateful to play, sounds good and makes a good impression and is full of appealing modulations and fetching melodies. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, shows the influence of Wagner, Schubert and Mendelssohn, an interesting group. The original sounding second movement is a jovial Scherzo, *Vivace non troppo*, features a rustic farmer's dance for its opening subject. It is followed by an *Andante semplice*, which creates a reverent aura of simplicity. The finale, *Rondo, Allegretto vivace*, full of impressive melodies and original touches rounds off this fine work, which I think would make a fine choice concert and which can be recommended to amateurs.

Phantastische Reigen for String Quartet, Op.50 (Fantastic Round Dances) take their name from the title to a poem *Die Zwei Reigen* (The Two Round Dances) by the German poet Conrad Ferdinand Meyer. The poem describes young people who have lost their loved ones to war and pestilence experience the reawakening of hope by dancing with new partners on the eve of May Day. The sixth and seventh stanzas of the poem are quoted by Weismann in the preface to the score and read:

The sun sets and light shines upon the land.
The moon scatters its silvery light about.
Now the dancers hold hand to hand,
And now mouth to mouth, grasping the wraiths of the dead.

And now the dancers rise up from the meadow
Gently holding hands, floating above in a quiet circle,
In the blue mist of the spring night.

This fine work, if given a concert performance is sure to make a strong impression on the audience. And experienced and accomplished amateur players will enjoy it as well.

String Quartet No.10 in G Major, Op.133 was composed over a three year period and completed in 1945. It is in four movements: *Allegro moderato*, *Allegretto*, *Molto lento* and *Con moto e grazio*. The opening movement sounds of Wagner, Richard Strauss and Max Reger. The *Allegretto* is an appealing scherzo, clever and original sounding. The *Molto lento* is also quite good with the use of tremolo adding considerable tension. The finale is playful and very interesting. The only knock against this work is that it sounds like it could have been sometime between 1885 and 1910 and not 1945. It can withstand concert performance and can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.11 in a minor, Op. 154 dates from 1947. In four movements, it opens with a *Lento-allegro* which is calm but lyrical, the *allegro* sounds rather like something Mozart or Schubert might have written had they been alive in 1900. It is lively and mostly upbeat. The second movement, *Adagio*, is calm but has an underlying restlessness. The *Poco andante* sounds like a slow, melancholy desiccated march. The finale, *Rondo, Allegro vivace* is gracious and pleasant. An entirely tonal work with only a few very mild instances of dissonance, unnoticeable really. It is a good work which if you did not know when it was composed, you would probably guess 1895-1910. It is strong enough for concert and can be appreciated by experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.1 in f minor, Op.43 was composed in 1916. It departs from tradition to the extent of having a slow first movement. It opens with a mysterious and mournful duet between the cello and viola to which the violins respond in a serene mood. Gradually all four voices are brought together in a weighty theme, which soon makes way for a broad melody after which there comes a passionate outburst. A Beethoven-like Scherzo, with a tender trio, follows. A spirit of repose characterizes the slow movement and one is left debating whether the second theme is finer than the first. There is a kinship to Beethoven in the emotional range of the music. The finale is passionate and ingenious. Amateurs will take pleasure in mastering a work which stands in the front rank of the new quartet literature, for it combines true classical form with modern feeling and fine melodic material. This fine work deserves to be heard on the concert stage as well as to take a place on the stands of amateur players. I

String Quartet No.2 in e minor, Op.49 dates from 1924. It is in four movements. The marking to the opening movement, *Langsam und ausdrucksvoll - Leidenschaftlich bewegt* (slow and expressive, passionately) pretty much describes how the music sounds—mysterious and spooky, rather like what you might hear during an old black and white murder mystery or horror film. The second movement, *Sehr langsam* (very slow) opens with three ominous chords, what follows sounds rather like the music you might hear at a funeral parlor, dark and sad. Next is a Scherzo, *Mäßig schnell-Trio. Ruhig* (moderately fast, trio calm) The music is restless with an underlying sense melancholy. The finale, *Finale. Getragen und schwer-Entschieden und kraftvoll* (solemn and heavy, decisive and powerful. Again, the marking pretty much says it all. This is not a happy work, to say the least. It is brooding, dark, at time ominous and stormy and magnificent. I can think of no quartet which sounds like it. It belongs in the concert hall. It is not a 'barn-burner', but highly interesting that holds one's interest from start to finish. Sadly, this is not a work for amateurs unless they are of a professional standard.

Jozef Wieniawski (1837-1912) was born in the Polish city of Lublin, then part of the Russian empire. Today, if he is remembered at all, it is as the younger brother of the more famous Henryk Wieniawski, one of the most outstanding violinists of all time. However, Jozef, during his lifetime, was one of Europe's best known and leading musicians in his own right. His first lessons were with his mother a fine pianist, a student of Eduard Wolff. At the age of 10, he entered the Paris Conservatory where he studied with Pierre Zimmermann and François Marmontel. Subsequently, a scholarship from the Tsar of Russia enabled him to study with Franz Liszt. For a while, he performed with his brother Henryk, but then embarked on his own as a touring piano virtuoso and was considered one of the foremost pianists of the time. Liszt thought so well of him that they played duo piano concertos in concert together. Josef knew and was friends with many of the Europe's



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leading composers such as Rossini, Gounod, Berlioz and Wagner and was a favorite of several national leaders including Napoleon III and the Tsar. Besides his career as a virtuoso pianist, he was a much sought after conductor and teacher. He served as a professor of piano at both the Moscow Conservatory and the Brussels Conservatory. He wrote one string quartet.

String Quartet in a minor, Op.32 dates from 1882. In its time, it was an extremely popular work, going through several editions before the outbreak of the First World War. This was no doubt due to the fact that it not only is filled with very appealing melodies but also has extremely fine part writing in which all four voices are given a chance to lead. In the opening movement, *Allegro con brio*, the first part of the brooding main theme is introduced by the cello and completed by the first violin. It is soon taken up by the others. The second theme is dominated by its unusual rhythm, giving the music an exotic flavor. Next comes a beautiful and highly romantic *Andante cantabile*. The vocal quality of the music is quite apparent. The *Scherzo, vivo con leggerezza*, is more like a slinky intermezzo than a scherzo. It, too, is dominated by its somewhat unusual rhythm. The finale, *Allegro energico e con fuoco*, is as the title suggests full of forward motion and fire. Good enough perhaps for an occasional concert performance but warmly recommended to amateurs.

If anyone can lay claim to the sobriquet "The Swedish Haydn" it is **Johan Wikmanson** (1753-1800) who was born in Stockholm and, except for 18 months spent in Copenhagen studying mathematics and instrument making, lived his entire life in the Swedish capital. He was a superb organist and for many years held the post of organist at the Storkyrkan, Stockholm's principal church. He was also an accomplished cellist. Nonetheless, like most Swedish musicians of this era, he was unable to earn his living solely as a practicing musician and was forced to find employment as a government accountant. He did, however, obtain some recognition during his lifetime. In 1788, he was made a member of the Swedish Royal Academy and later was put in charge of its music program. Wikmanson composed five string quartets, none which were published during his lifetime. After his early death of tuberculosis in 1800, his friend Gustav Silverstolpe published, at his own expense, what he considered to be the three best, titling them *Opus 1*. Later, Silverstolpe gave the rights to the well-known German publisher Breitkopf and Härtel, hoping they would publish the quartets and hence give them wider circulation. However, this appears not to have happened. No new edition appeared for more than 170 years. Then, between 2006 and 2011, Edition Silvertrust, published new editions of the quartets. At present (2023) they remain available from Edition Silvertrust.

We do not know exactly when **String Quartet No.1 in d minor Op.1 No.1** as Silverstolpe styled it, was composed. It certainly was not the first and most scholars believe it was probably his fifth and last quartet. There is evidence to support this in that Silverstolpe selected what he (and most others) considered the strongest work to be placed first in the set of three which he published. This was common practice because it was generally felt that it was the first quartet in the book which got people in the door so to speak, i.e. got them interested in playing the others. The weakest was usually placed in the middle and another strong work at the end. The *Op.1 Quartets* were dedicated to Haydn, albeit posthumously. Though Wikmanson did not know Haydn personally, it is clear that he was familiar with Haydn's quartets, including the *Op.76* which were published in 1799, the year before his death. Haydn for his part, was very impressed by these works and tried to stimulate interest in them. The quartet is in four movements--*Allegro--Adagio--Minuetto* and *Allegro*. It is the equal of any of Haydn's *Op.64* quartets and in some ways, in advance of them, particularly in its excellent use of the viola and cello. The most striking movement is the marvelous *Adagio*, a powerful funeral march--which was performed at Wikmanson's

own funeral. It is reminiscent of the slow movement to Haydn's *Op.20 No.2*, one of the finest Haydn ever wrote. The minuet is also grave in mood although its lovely trio is much like an Austrian *Ländler*. The finale features a wild racing melody with a surprise ending. The quartet is strong enough for concert where it could be presented either in lieu of or alongside a Haydn to that there was someone in the far north composing quartets with a quality as fine as Haydn. Excellent choice for amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in e minor, like the first, is also in four movements. Thematically, it is on a par with Haydn's *Op.64* quartets and, in advance of them in its excellent use of the viola and cello. In the second quartet, this is especially apparent in the second movement, *Un poco adagio*, which is a theme and set of variations. The work opens with an interesting a Haydnesque *Allegro di molto*. The theme and variations of the second movement are as good as any that Haydn ever penned. They are followed by a muscular, thrusting *Menuetto* with a contrasting trio which lead without pause to the finale. The first part is a continuation of the minuet, however, the main body of the movement is a thrilling *Prestissimo*. Like *No.1* good for concert and home.

String Quartet No.3 in B flat Major is perhaps the most Haydnesque of the three works. Certainly the charming opening movement, *Allegro*, brings Haydn to mind. The movement is interesting because it proceeds by way of variation. The second movement, a *Romance*, also uses variations each more appealing than previous. Next comes a very typical Haydn-like minuet and the exciting finale, *Scherzando poco presto*, also sounds like it came from the pen of the master. Good for concert and home.



Nicolai von Wilm (1834-1911) was born in the old Hanseatic city of Riga, today's capital of Latvia, but then part of the Russian empire. In the 19th century, Riga was still predominantly a German city and Wilm's family was ethnic German. He first learned piano and then studied that instrument as well as composition at the Leipzig Conservatory. Subsequently, he worked as a music director in Riga and St. Petersburg after which he moved to Wiesbaden in Germany where he remained for the rest of his life. He was a prolific composer who wrote in most genres, but the bulk of his music was for piano. However, he did not ignore chamber music and wrote one string quartet which his publisher listed as *No.1* but to the best of my knowledge, there is no *No.2*.

String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.4 is the only chamber work which he did not compose while living in Wiesbaden. Although it was published in 1875, it was clearly composed many years earlier as evidenced by the influence, especially in the finale, of Mendelssohn which can be found in the music. This influence is hardly surprising given that Wilm attended the Leipzig Conservatory only a few years after its founding by Mendelssohn and studied with teachers who all the great man's acolytes. The Quartet is in four movements and opens with long brooding *Poco adagio* introduction. After a brief pause comes the main part of the first movement, *Allegro appassionato*, which as the marking suggests is passionate and full of drama. But it is not without lyricism as the lovely second theme clearly shows. The second movement, *Sostenuto cantabile*, is a beautiful and heartfelt example of mid 19th century romantic writing. An rhythmically interesting *Scherzo molto vivace* comes next. It is playful and light. The compelling finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, opens with a loud chord followed by yearning Mendelssohnian theme. This is an effective work is good enough and recommended to amateurs. Though published as *No.1*, it is the only quartet he wrote.

Johan Wilhelm Wilms (1772-1847) was born in the German town of Witzhelden. After lessons from his father in piano and composition, Wilms studied flute on his own, and then moved to



Amsterdam in 1791 and obtained a position playing flute in an orchestra there. Soon his talent as a pianist was recognized and he became a soloist, giving the Dutch premieres of the piano concertos of Mozart and Beethoven. Today, in the Netherlands, he is still remembered for composing the music to the first Dutch national anthem. He wrote in most genres and his works were frequently praised in

the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (AMZ). He wrote two string quartets. I am not familiar with the second.

String Quartet No.1, in g minor, Op.25 No.1 is the first of a set of two thought to date from around 1806. The AMZ reviewer wrote that they sounded remarkably modern for its time. I don't agree. Haydn had written more modern sounding music 15 years earlier. Onslow's first quartet written about the same time sounds light years ahead by comparison. I would say this music sounds like it was composed around 1775-1780. The first movement, Allegro, is very charming with gracious melodies, however, the first violin seems to have all of the thematic and melodic material. An Andante has rococo written all over it. Here the material get thrown around a little more. On the whole its quite charming though unremarkable. A third movement, Menuetto allegro, is good and sounds like it might have been written by Haydn around 1770. The finale, Allegro, is a mix of middle Mozart and early Schubert. If I have one criticism of this quartet, it is that it does not have a particularly original quality to it. However, it is filled with beautiful melodies which are very. While not a candidate for the concert hall, it can be recommended to amateurs.



Alexander Winkler (1865-1935) was born in the then Russian city of Kharkov (today Kharkiv in the Ukraine) He studied piano and composition locally and then in Moscow and St. Petersburg. He continued his studies in Paris with Alphonse Duvernoy and in Vienna with Theodor Leschetizky, where he was also a composition student of Karl Nawratil. and Vienna before returning to Kharkov where he

taught piano for a number of years before being appointed to a professorship at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Sergei Prokofiev was among his many students. In 1924, he emigrated to France and served as director of the Conservatory in Besancon. He wrote three string quartets.

String Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op.7 dates from 1897. It is enjoyable both to play and to hear and it is are not at all difficult for experienced players. The opening movement begins with an Andante espressivo introduction in canonic form. The main part of the movement, Allegro con brio, is full of feeling and lyricism. In the Adagio which follows, the second theme, full of yearning, is particularly impressive. A spikey Scherzo, which is not without humor, comes next. The trio section begins as an intermezzo but also sports a fugue. The lively and spirited finale, Allegro assai also has a warm and lyrical subject. Deserves concert performance and is warmly recommended to amateur players.

String Quartet No.2 in d minor, Op.9 was completed in 1901 and was dedicated to his friend Alexander Glazunov. The first movement is in two sections—Praeludium and Fugue. The Praeludium is a dignified Lento, The Fugue, Allegro con brio, has quiet a striking main theme. The second movement is entitled Variations sur un air de ballet d'A. Glazounov, who of course would have recognized it. There are seven excellent variations which demonstrate that Winkler was a master of t his format. Next comes a lovely Larghetto with a contrasting, somewhat agitated middle section. The finale is an Allegro filled with very appealing thematic material. An excellent concert choice and one which is also highly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No3 in B flat major, Op.14 came out in 1909 and was dedicated to the memory of the famous Russian chamber music patron and publisher M.P. Belaiev. The themes to the opening Allegro non troppo are noble and befitting a memorial tribute. A marvelous somewhat orchestral sounding Scherzo follows but it is not at all easy to pull off, the contrasting trio makes effective use of harmonics. Next comes an cloying Andante. The captivating finale, Allegretto scherzando, allegro is exciting and quite a good finish. Can withstand concert performance as well as being recommended to amateurs.



Dag Wiren (1905-1986) was born in the Swedish town of Striberg. He studied at the Stockholm Conservatory with the Russian composer and music critic Leonid Sabaneyev. He spent some time in Paris where he got to know Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Les Six, His style can, for the most part be called neo-classical. He wrote six string quartets but disowned the first two known as Nos. 0 and 1. I have not played any of these works but have heard them in concert and on recordings.

String Quartet No.2, Op.9 dates from 1935. It is in three movements—Theme and variations, Scherzo and Finale. Generally, it is a sunny, genial work much inclined to happiness. Full of bustle, tonally pleasant. The theme of the first movement, however, is slightly sad, but the variations are more upbeat. The Scherzo is a bit like a march, the rhythm dominates this interesting movement. The finale is very fast in which strumming pizzicato chords add a drumming quality. Clearly not easy to play but a good movement. Strong enough for concert and experienced amateurs should be okay with it.

String Quartet No.3, Op.18 was completed in 1945. The first three of the four movements were written in close succession. The grave autumnal fourth movement was somewhat later. It remains a bustlingly active piece. The first section of the opening Allegro moderato is full of pulsing forward motion and sounds like a neo classical rendering of a bustling American metropolis. There is a slower more lyrical section which provides a nice contrast. The second movement is in three sections Andante - Vivace - Allegretto. It starts off leisurely and slightly lyrical. It leads to a unisono pizzicato section. The tempo picks and stays brisk for the rest. The Presto which comes next is nervous and quite exciting. The finale, marked Allegro, does not begin at that tempo but sounds closer to a lyrical almost sound-like andante but there are strange rapid outbursts which take control of the movement tempo-wise. This movement is not as focused as the previous three. Still not bad. Not quite as impressive as No.2. Because of the last movement I am not sure concert performance is warranted and it does not sound like a work for most amateurs.

String Quartet No. 4, Op.28 dates from 1953. t is in five movements with two intermezzi, one marked Moderato the other Prestissimo. . The tonality has a tendency to wander ... though pleasingly. The music unites gritty determination with a sinister or haunting quality. There is no denying the power. The first movement Calmo, allegro molto starts off quiet with a spooky mood created by the violins in their high registers. The allegro sounds orchestral at first. Then over the low sustained cello notes the violins produce an eerie effect. There is a lost of pounding here. The thematic material is not terribly focused. The third movement, The second movement, Intermezzo moderato is entirely unfocused and wanders leaving little impression because of this. Intermezzo prestissimo is dominated by its very nervous, impelling rhythm. The mood is dark and threatening. The scorching downward-slashing violin 'dives' in the exhilarating Prestissimo are memorable. Next is a Lento which is dark as if one has entered a dimly lit, unpleasant chamber, The work concludes with a wild Allegro molto. This is a stunning movement which burst out of the gate. Highly original, riveting and full of original

touches. By itself this movement makes this work concert worthy. Again beyond most amateur players.

String Quartet No.5, Op.41 was finished in 1970. It is in three movements. The highly original Allegro molto is unusual for its dynamic effect of loud and immediately soft every two measure of the short theme. Very effective. The rest of this impressive movement deals with the development of thematic kernel. An Andante espressivo-Allegro capriccioso comes next. The andante makes little impression. The allegro is not appreciably better. The concluding Allegro does not start off with a very fast tempo. Suddenly a bunch of loud pizzicato chords herald in the main tempo. The thematic material is not particularly focused and generally seems unsuitable for a finale. After a lot of prancing about, the movement just dies away softly without warning. Here again, there is one incredible movement, the first, but last two movements to not come close in interest. Hard to justify bringing this to concert as it goes downhill after the first movement. And again, I do not think amateurs are going to make much of this.



Georges Witkowski (1867-1943) was born in the French Algerian town of Mostaganem. Witkowski started out in the army, becoming a cavalry officer and met the composer Louis Vierne from whom he took composition lessons. He later studied with Vincent d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum of Paris, and, after settling in Lyon, was appointed director of the conservatory there.

String Quartet in E Major dates from 1902 and is the only one he composed. It is in five movements and based on the cyclic principal pioneered by Cesar Franck, d'Indy's teacher. The opening movement, Lent et soutenu, is melancholy but not particularly sad. The big second movement, Assez anime has a plethora of interesting themes. Generally upbeat, and typical of the French Impressionism of the time. The center of gravity of the quartet and quite a good movement. The third movement, Tres vif, is a lively and appealing scherzo. This is followed by a Tres lent, sad and lyrical. The finale, Anime, is bright and upbeat with a pulsing forward motion with the perfume of the French Impressionism. I think this quartet is on a par with the Debussy and Ravel and deserves to be heard in concert. It is not beyond good amateurs.



Joseph Woelfl (1773-1812) In German Wölfl but most of his works were published with his name spelled Woelfl. He was certainly in the thick of it when it came to knowing the musical greats of his time. Born in Salzburg, he studied with both Leopold Mozart and Michael Haydn. Like Wolfgang, he first appeared in public as a soloist on the violin at the age of seven. He then switched to the piano and by the time he visited Wolfgang in Vienna in 1790, he was already a virtuoso. Woelfl was very tall, over 6 feet, and had an enormous finger span. He could play 12ths the way others played octaves. He put this skill to good use, especially in his extempore performances. Wolfgang, duly impressed, secured an excellent position for Woelfl in Poland with Count Oginsky. In Warsaw, Woelfl created a sensation as a virtuoso and became a much sought after teacher. But in 1795, because of the third Partition of Poland, he was forced to return to Vienna. There, he befriended Beethoven and used Mozart's librettist Emanuel Schickel's librettist Emanuel Schickel for his own operas. Although accounts vary, Beethoven was said to have defeated Woelfl in a piano improvisation duel in 1799, after which Woelfl's local popularity waned. Between 1801 and 1805, he lived Paris and then for the rest of his life in London, where he died. He wrote 24 string quartets. I have played eight of these.

His Op.4 String Quartets is a set of three.. They were composed around 1798. Each of the three quartets has four movements and more or less follows a Fast—Slow—Minuet—Fast pattern. The writing is really quite accomplished, if somewhat dated for 1798—the musical language come close to Haydn's Op.33 or 50 quartets. They were extraordinarily popular and as a result went through several editions and for good reason: They have appealing melodies and good part-writing.

String Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op.4 No.1 is the first the set In the opening movement, Allegro, a dotted 8th and 16th theme dominate. It is passed from voice to voice a la Haydn. The second movement, an Allegretto, which begins with pizzicato, is a theme and set of variations. A clever and very Viennese Menuetto and trio come next. The finale, a Presto rather resembles an exciting steeple chase. This quartet is strong enough for concert and replacement for the inevitable Haydn. It can be warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet in F major, Op. 4 No. 2 The lively opening Allegro is dominated by its military like rhythm. The second movement is a lovely Andante con moto. The appealing Minuetto, allegro which comes next is quite Haydnesque. The main theme to the finale, Allegro ma non troppo, is playful but perhaps somewhat trite. Recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.3 in c minor, Op.4 No.3 is the last of a set of three which date from 1798. In the opening movement, Allegro, the main theme is a diffident, somewhat melancholic, syncopated melody which is passed from voice to voice. The canonic second movement, Menuetto, allegretto, begins with the cello presenting the drumbeat like subject. The others in turn join in. The marvelous and deeply felt third movement, Adagio ma non troppo, is of great beauty, A bumptious and energetic finale, Presto, tops off this excellent classical era quartet. A good choice for concert and for home music makers.

A set of six quartets, his Op.10 appeared around 1799. **String Quartet No.4 in C major, Op. 10 No.1** begins with a pleasant but not particularly memorable Allegro moderato. This is followed up by a decent Andante and a pretty ordinary Minuetto. The finale, an Allegro, is decent. While there is nothing wrong with this quartet, the material is not particularly inspired. As there are so many other worthy works from this era not only by Woelfl but also from Krommer and the Wranitzkys, give this a miss.

String Quartet No.7 in G major, Op. 10, No.4 begins with an Allegro which is not anything special. A Haydnesque Minuetto, allegro is placed second and this is a pretty good effort. Third is a delicate Andante, another good movement. The finale, Prestissimo unfortunately is not inspired. I cannot suggest that you spend any time with it.

In 1805 Woelfl brought out another set of three quartets, his Op.30. The writing, as regards, dividing up the material between the instruments, is quite good, on a par with Haydn's Op.76. **String Quartet No.10 in E flat Major, Op.30 No.1** is the first of a set of three which date from 1805. The opening movement, Allegro, begins with a bouncy theme in 6/8. Several lyrical episodes provide fine contrast. The second movement, Adagio is a real standout, powerful and dramatic, it makes a very strong impression. Next comes a Haydnesque Minuetto, allegro. The finale, Allegretto, is very Viennese-sounding is a bright and exciting romp. Strong enough for concert and for amateurs as well.

String Quartet No.11 in C Major, Op.30 No.2 The opening movement, Allegro, begins with a stately theme which is developed by means of running triplets in all of the voices, the first violin and cello in particular. It should be noted that the handling of the cello throughout the work is superior to all but the Op.76 quartets of Haydn. The treatment is very Viennese and the music could easily be mistaken for that of Haydn and this is in no way to imply any imitation. The second movement, a very Haydnesque Minuetto in the galant style, is particularly noteworthy for its, for the time, remarkable harmonic innovation, There are faint echoes of a similar movement in Mozart's last symphony, The Jupiter. In the lyrical Adagio which follows, there is a very

stylized treatment which is reserved and contemplative while curiously at the same time creating a sense of tension and drama. The brilliant finale, Allegro, again very Viennese-sounding is a bright and exciting romp. An excellent choice for concert and warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.12 in D Major, Op.30 No.3 In the opening Allegro the interaction of the parts is given precedence over the distinct individuality of any one part which creates a highly blended and intricate effect. It should be noted that Woelfl's handling of the cello here also is on a par with the Op.76 quartets of Haydn. The second movement, marked Minuetto is more like a scherzo of the type one finds in early Beethoven or late Haydn. The third movement, Andante un poco allegretto, is quite striking with its serious mood and subdued, march like rhythms. The main theme of the galloping finale, Prestissimo, bears a striking resemblance to the opening movement of Beethoven's Op.18 No.3. Again, a work strong enough for concert as a welcome replacement for the inevitable Haydn. Amateurs will like it too.



Hugo Wolf (1860-1903) was born in what was then the Austrian town of Windischgraz. He showed an early predilection for music and studied both piano and violin as a boy. He attended the Vienna Conservatory but was expelled. He then continued to study composition on his own, which was of seminal importance to his development as an experimental composer,

especially in his instrumental works. Temperamentally unable to hold a steady position, Wolf worked for most of the rest of his life as a critic and music teacher in Vienna. As a composer, Wolf made his name as a composer of songs (lieder) and is generally regarded as the greatest master, after Schubert, of this art form. Wolf was under the spell of Wagner and became a representative of the so-called New German School which adhered to the use of the chromaticism and other innovations that were to be found in Wagner's music. He became a fierce opponent of Brahms and the old guard. In the realm of chamber music, Wolf is really only known for his Italian Serenade, which was also orchestrated and which is generally, when given in concert, performed in that version. He wrote one string quartet and two additional other substantial one movement works for the genre.

The **String Quartet in d minor** was his only complete string quartet. It was written over a five year period between 1879 and 1884. It is a powerful, highly dramatic work, which unfortunately received its premier in 1903, only a few months before the composer's death. Despite certain youthful flaws, it met with acclaim and several critics noted that if it had been premiered immediately after it had been composed, it would have placed Wolf in the front rank of contemporary chamber music composers. From the opening measures of the first movement, Grave-leidenschaftig bewegt, the mood in which Wolf began this work is quite clear. The Grave serves as a slow introduction, and comes closest in feeling, with its violin recitativo full of pathos, to the motto of the quartet, Renounce, you shall renounce. Instantly, a very high emotional pitch is established and continues to be reflected in the descriptive tempo markings, which I have translated from the German since this is an English language publication. We find: "Gradually more animated", followed by "With passionate animation", then "raging" followed by "As fast as possible". At points, there is an undeniable similarity between the quicker Leidenschaftig bewegt, with its wildly jagged march rhythms, searing dissonances and implacable defiance and Beethoven's Grosse fuga. Yet, despite this and whatever other stylistic defects the movement has, it makes a powerful and indelible impression. The very lengthy slow movement, Langsam, is of extraordinary breadth. To say that the theme only unfolds gradually may perhaps be an under statement. It begins almost inaudibly with a series of ethereal chords in highest register of the violins. There is

no denying that this treatment could have existed without the precedent of the Prelude to Lohengrin. At one point the peaceful and heavenly idyll is briefly interrupted by three heavy chords in the cello that bring to mind the opening bars of the fourth movement to Beethoven's Op.135. These chords represented the ominous 'knock on the door' of Beethoven's landlady demanding the rent. (Shostakovich used it even more tellingly in the fourth movement of his 8th Quartet). These chords also appear much later to create a sense of disturbing unease. The lovely second theme seems to bear some relationship to the slow movement of Bruckner's Third Symphony. It is juxta positioned against a lengthy series of what were for the time surely horrifically dissonant passages. It was if Wolf was trying to create the extremes of great beauty and great ugliness. Or perhaps showing us that the idea of perfect beauty is unattainable. Although he has obviously used the themes of others as the building blocks for his music, again, it is hard to deny that this is highly moving music, in many ways unparalleled in the literature. This slow movement is without doubt the high point of the work. The third movement, Resolut, is mercifully short by comparison to the two preceding ones. It serves the purpose of a scherzo. And in fact, it is, with its dotted rhythm, not much more than a paraphrase of the scherzo of Beethoven's Op.95 quartet. While most critics and scholars have immediately recognized this fact, Wolf does not seem to have received the criticism which I believe he deserves for this unimaginative usage. If you compare Wolf's effort with the third movement, Allegro vivace, of Wilhelm Stenhammar's String Quartet No.2, which also quotes the same theme, you can quickly hear how threadbare and lacking in ideas Wolf was. The rather ordinary trio section is lyrical in a Schumannesque kind of way. This brings us then to the finale, Sehr lebhaft. In no way does it match the psychological depth of the preceding three movements. And this is hardly surprising since it was composed quite a while after them. Wolf was almost certainly in a different frame of mind and certainly, as noted earlier, he no longer was composing in the same style that he had been. This creates a very jarring effect, to say the least. It is as if a movement of another composer had been indiscriminately tacked on to the first three—a composer who sounded nothing like the first composer. Normally, when one attempts to complete a work of another composer, one tries to emulate that composer's style. In the same vein, composers, who return to their own work, after many years, to revise it, though they might write something completely different, almost always attempt to match their earlier style so as to make the work a unified whole. Not Hugo Wolf. It can, of course, be argued, that of the four movements, it is this one which sounds the most like Hugo Wolf and not someone else. In fact, it sounds very much like the Italian Serenade of 1887. So much so, that one is forced to conclude Wolf, when he came to write the Italian Serenade some three years later, poured over this movement and borrowed heavily. You can clearly hear this immediately. Critics have always been of two minds about this quartet—giving it high praise or dismissing it altogether. Despite all of its flaws, it is an interesting, if not a frustrating, work which should be heard in concert. It is not beyond good amateurs.

Sometime in 1882, Wolf began work on a scherzo which when it was completed some four years hence in October of 1886, Wolf titled **Intermezzo**. Although there is no hard evidence for or against, the general consensus of Wolf scholars seems to be that originally, Wolf had in mind composing another string quartet. Once again, he was unable to secure a performance of what in his correspondence, he referred to as his "Humorous Intermezzo." It can almost be regarded as experimental. Although in one movement, it is a large work. It is a rondo with episodes and varied restatements derived from the main theme as to suggest different aspects of the same characters linked by a dialogue or colloquy with a hint of dance. It begins with a gorgeous melody which Wolf interrupts without warning with what must

have then seemed like very jarring interludes, both from a rhythmic and tonal standpoint. This writing is far in advance of anything being written at the time. Wolf takes the players and listeners on an incredible journey to unimagined places only in the end to return to the familiar and well-loved. Too big for an encore, professionals could easily program this fine work where something shorter between bigger works is needed. Technically, it makes no demands which cannot be handled by amateurs, however, a strong sense of rhythm is a must.

The last work Wolf wrote for string quartet is the **Italian Serenade**. It is his best known instrumental work, but ironically few have heard it in its original version for string quartet, or even know that the orchestral version is an arrangement made by the composer. Max Reger, when writing about it, was one of many, who had no idea. But he was certainly keen on it, writing: "This appealing work belonging to the most enthralling works that we have in the whole of the serenade literature will soon be a repertoire piece among all of our better orchestras. This one movement is of such enchanting charm, of such a captivating, highly original color that it certainly will inspire the greatest enthusiasm." It seems odd that Reger did not notice the extraordinary similarity between the Serenade and the final movement of the d minor quartet. Wolf composed it in May of 1887. It is a one movement work which was to have been the first of a three movement effort. It is designed as a rondo and certainly does capture a certain Mediterranean quality. It was inspired by a novella *Der Soldat* which is about a young violinist who leaves his country home and grumbling father to make his fortune. He soon charms everyone with his gifts but also alienates many with a streak of triviality. Wolf could hardly have found a character who more closely resembled himself. In the novella, there is in fact an Italian Serenade played by a small orchestra and this fact may have led Wolf to arrange it for such an ensemble. The consensus is that the quartet version is more successful. It makes a fine encore and should not be missed by either professionals or amateurs.



Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (1876-1948) was born in Venice, the son of a German father and an Italian mother. Throughout his life, he felt torn between the two cultures, uniting in himself the deep-felt German seriousness of purpose with sunny, Italian *bel canto* melody. His father was a painter and initially Ermanno wanted to follow in his footsteps. However after studying painting in Rome and Munich, he enrolled in the Royal Conservatory there and studied composition with Joseph Rheinberger. He spent the rest of his life between Munich and Venice, never entirely satisfied in either place. This tension was, however, an important source of creativity for him. Wolf-Ferrari enjoyed his greatest success while still rather young, winning international fame for several of his operas between 1900 and the First World War. He served as Choral Director in Milan and later became the director of the Marcello Music Academy in Venice and taught at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. The First World War created an emotional crisis in that his "two fatherlands" were fighting on opposite sides. He chose to live in neutral Switzerland for the duration. Though mainly known for his operas, he was quite fond of chamber music and wrote a fair amount including two piano trios, a string quartet, a string quintet and several other works.

His **String Quartet in e minor, Op.23** dates from 1940. It is not a happy work, perhaps due to the fact that Germany and Italy were once again involved in a world war, although this time on the same side. The opening movement *Allegro, Andante tranquillo* is dark and melancholy. The same mood pervades the *Andante cantabile* which follows. The third movement, *Capriccio, Allegro pesante* has a brighter mood although I would not describe it a bright. It makes attempts at playfulness a la *capriccio* but overall

it is rather gentle. The finale, *Allegro*, while not dark, is not joyful or dramatic or exciting. It is gentle, sometimes genial but that's it.. This is, for long stretches, a depressing work. I cannot see bringing it into concert or recommend it to amateurs.

Friedrich Wollanck (1782-1831) was born in Berlin. He studied the violin, bass and composition from various teachers including Carl Friedrich Fasch. He knew and was friends with Carl Maria von Weber, Cherubini and Giacomo Rossini, among others. He pursued a dual career as a lawyer and composer writing in most genres, including three string quartets.

Some years ago, I had the good fortune to come across a reprint of the original edition of his **String Quartet in G Major**. Judging from the style, I would say it was composed between 1800 and 1810. It is in four movements—An engaging *Allegro*, a lovely *Andantino*, a good *Minuetto*, *allegro* with nicely contrasting trio, and a satisfying *Allegro molto finale*. This is a work full of pleasant melodies written in the late Vienna Classical Style which can be warmly recommended to amateurs.



Charles Wood (1866-1926) was born in the Irish town of Armagh. After studying organ with local teachers, he left for London in 1883 and entered the Royal College of Music where he studied with Charles Villiers Stanford and Hubert Parry. He worked as an organist and eventually became a professor of music at Cambridge University. Among his students were Ralph Vaughn Williams and Herbert Howells. Wood was a prolific composer and composed six string quartets. I am not familiar with his first quartet which he wrote in 1885 as a student.

String Quartet No.2 in E flat Major dates from 1893 and was subtitled *Highgate*. Why, I have been unable to determine. It opens with a genial *Allegro con moto*. The main theme is quite pleasant and song-like but the rhythmic accompaniment is rather trite taking away from the overall effect. The second movement, *Molto moderato*, is sweet, perhaps a little too sweet, it is a kind of *intermezzo*. Third is an *Adagio ma non troppo*. It begins with a dark viola solo. Again, the long and very nice violin solo which comes next is ruined by the accompaniment. This in turn is followed by a *pizzicato* episode which does not seem to fit in. Finally there is a dramatic section which is pretty good. The finale, *Molto animato*, is has a very busy rhythm over which a rather thin theme is played. This sounds like a work in which the composer was still learning how to compose. There is much here which could have been made better. I would give this one a miss.

String Quartet No.3 in a minor dates from 1911. In this quartet, Woods charted a new path, relying on Irish folk melodies and dances for his thematic material. The opening movement, *Allegro, un poco maestoso* is full of turbulence and drama, interspersed with lyrical episodes. Next comes a fleet footed somewhat playful *Presto* in the form of a *scherzo*. The third movement is a lyrical *Adagio* and the finale, *Allegro molto*, has much the character of the first movement. This is certainly a better quartet than No.2 and it is clear that by 1911, Wood had improved his compositional technique. That said, this is not a quartet for concert performance although it can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in E flat Major dates from 1912. It bore the subtitle *Harrowgate*. This may have to do with the fact that Wood received an honorary doctorate from Leeds University and Harrogate College was part of the university. The main theme of the opening *Allegro con moto* is appealing and the accompaniment effective. A good movement. In second place is a *Prestissimo*, taking the place of a *scherzo*. The thematic material is rather pale and the whole things is not very interesting. Interestingly, the *Adagio* which comes next starts off rather like No.2 with a long viola solo which is probably an Irish folk tune. This is a

decent movement. The finale, Allegro molto, is full of forward motion. The theme could be some sort of Irish jig. It has its moments and starts off pretty good but the development is weaker. Not for concert though it can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.5 in F Major came in 1914. The first movement, Poco adagio, starts off quietly and sounds funereal. Gradually, it becomes more lyrical and the mood lightens a bit. The middle movement, Allegretto, is a kind of intermezzo. The rhythm is too fussy and the thematic material thin. The finale, Allegro un poco vivace, has a main theme which sounds like some sort of children's ditty, trite. There is nothing here for you.

String Quartet No.6 in F Major was completed in 1916 The Allegro con moto has a gracious theme but the accompaniment sounds too much like a left hand piano accompaniment. It does get a bit better as it goes along. The second movement, Allegro vivace, has a short pizzicato introduction and is played muted. It is a kind of scherzo. In the middle there is an Irish folk dance. This is a good movement. The Adagio which comes third is lyrical and the main theme sounds like an Irish song. Not bad at all. The finale, Allegro molto, is bright and upbeat and has elements of a rustic dance. This quartet along with his third is his best. Certainly, it can be recommended to amateurs and maybe, just maybe, it could receive an occasional concert performance.



Felix Woysch (1860-1944) was born in the then Austrian town of Troppau. He was raised in Dresden and Altona. He was largely self taught. In his time he was mostly known for his vocal music and he worked as a choral director. He wrote five string quartets. I am familiar only with the first. The fourth was lost and the fifth remains unpublished in manuscript.

String Quartet in a minor, Op.55 dates from 1910, The first movement, Maessig bewegt, is very uneven. There are parts which are superb and other parts which ought to be removed. And it is not at all easy to play in those places. The second movement, Sehr ruhig, is features a sad, noble theme. It goes on for rather long time and could have benefited from being less long. A scherzo, Sehr lebhaft is next. It is not all that lively. A slower trio section is waltz like. The finale, Lebhaft und Schwungvoll, is weak on thematic material, and presents very difficult rhythmic passages for the players. Despite certain excellences, I cannot recommend this work to amateurs and it certainly should not be brought to the concert hall.



Anton Wranitzky (1761-1820 Antonin Vranický in Czech) was born in the Moravian town of Neureisch in the Austrian Habsburg Empire, today Nové Říše in the Czech Republic. He was the younger half-brother of the composer Paul Wranitzky, who was the better known of the two, although both were in their time fairly well-known, especially in Vienna but also throughout Europe where their music was often performed. Anton's first music lessons were from Paul. He studied philosophy in Olmütz (Olomouc) and subsequently from 1778 to 1782 jurisprudence and music in Brunn (Brno). After that, he followed his brother to Vienna, where starting in 1783, he took composition lessons from Mozart, Haydn and Georg Albrechtsberger. A talented violinist, he worked as a freelance musician until 1790 when he was hired by Prince Lobkowitz, the patron of Haydn and Beethoven, and eventually became Kapellmeister or Music Director of the Prince's orchestra. In 1807 he became the orchestra director of the Imperial Court Theater and in 1814 he became conductor in the Theater an der Wien. He knew all of the major musical figures in Vienna and was often engaged by Beethoven

to conduct premieres of his symphonies. Wranitzky wrote in most genres and left some 60 works of chamber music, most for standard ensembles. He wrote at least 21 string quartets. I have played two of these.

String Quartet in a minor, Op.13 No.1 is the first of a set of three dating from 1806 and dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz for whom Haydn had also composed quartets. The quartet, written in the late Viennese Classical Style and opens with a bright, Mozartian Allegro. The second movement, a lovely Andantino. Next comes a Haydenesque, classically Viennese Menuetto allegretto, with a nicely contrasting trio in the minor. The work closes with a charming, lilting Allegretto. This fine work is not only appealing but has fine part-writing for each voice. It is a historically valuable work because it shows what other Viennese Classical composers beyond Haydn and Mozart were doing, but appealing in its own right. It makes an excellent concert choice as a replacement for a Haydn, warmly recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet in a minor, Op.13 No.2 is the second of a set of three dating from 1806. The quartet, written in the late Viennese Classical Style, though technically in three movements, is actually in four in as much as the final movement combines a menuetto with a presto. The quartet opens with an ominous short introduction, leading to an agitated and stormy main section. The middle movement, an Adagio, is tuneful with many tempo changes. The finale begins as a minuet, but is seamlessly intertwined with a fast rondo. Good for concert and home.



Paul Wranitzky (1756-1808 Pavel Vranický in the Czech form) was born in the town Nová Ríše (then Neureisch) in Moravia. At age 20, like so many other Czech composers of that period, he moved to Vienna to seek out opportunities within the Austrian imperial capital.

Wranitzky played a prominent role in the musical life of Vienna. He was on friendly terms and highly respected by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven who preferred him as the conductor of their new works. Wranitzky was, as so many of his contemporaries, a prolific composer. His chamber works number over 100. Although some scholars believe that Wranitzky studied with Haydn, there is no proof of this. But there can be no question that he studied and was influenced by Haydn's quartets. Like Haydn, Wranitzky's quartet writing went through many stages of development beginning with the pre-classical and evolving to the finished sonata form of the late Vienna Classics. After Mozart, Haydn and Franz Krommer, Paul Wranitzky must be considered the most important composer from the Viennese Classical era. Writing about Wranitzky's chamber music in the last part of the 19th century, the famous French critic and musicologist Fétis recalled: *"The music of Wranitzky was in fashion when it was new because of his natural melodies and brilliant style...I recall that, in my youth, his works held up very well in comparison with those of Haydn. Their premature abandonment of today has been for me a source of astonishment."* Wranitzky is known to have composed at least 54 string quartets. I can only discuss those I have had the pleasure to play.

Op.15 No.3 in B flat Major is the third of a set of six dating from 1791. Most of Wranitzky's quartets follow a three movement pattern and the minuet is usually omitted but when present, it often takes the place of a faster finale. Op.15 No.3, however, is quite unusual in its construction. Formally, it is only in two movements, however, the second movement consists of two sections each of which appears twice and hence could be considered two movements combined into one. But in other ways, this work is very typical of Wranitzky's quartet style. The writing has a rustic, folksy and quaint quality with many original touches. It was a style for which he became well-known. The work begins with a stately Adagio introduction in which the first violin presides. It leads to an Allegro which is the main section. Here, the

second violin introduces the main theme. Later both the viola and the cello get a chance to take over the thematic material. The second movement, *A Andante poco adagio*, is a serenade in which the cello is given the chance to lead with a very lengthy solo. Neither Haydn nor Mozart were this adventurous in their cello writing. The first violin eventually takes over but the cello returns later to finish off this section which leads without pause to an exciting Hungarian rondo. Here is a work, not only suitable for amateurs, but as deserving of concert performance. It would make a welcome replacement for the inevitable Haydn or Mozart on any program.

Op.16 No.1 in B flat Major is the first of a set of six published in 1790 in two books or sets of three. It can be argued that they were in advance of the works of any other composer from this period, including Haydn, with the exception of Mozart. Of particular interest is the fine use Wranitzky makes of the cello. This is somewhat surprising since unlike his Op.23 quartets, he was not commissioned to do so by the cello-playing King of Prussia. This is the only quartet of the set that has four movements. Right from the opening bars of the peppy main theme to the *Allegro Moderato*, the cello is given a chance to shine. The music moves forth effortlessly, sailing along with running passage work and singing melodies. The second movement, an *Adagio*, is played muted. The main theme begins in stately fashion. Then, the first violin is given an aria to a very unusual accompaniment which gives the work its original feel and is the sort of writing for which Wranitzky was well-known. Then a little peasant dance is inserted when least expected. An archetypical Viennese Menuetto with lovely trio section follows. The fourth movement is simply marked *Finale* without any tempo marking, however, it is clearly a lively affair best played *Presto*. The themes are quite catchy and of the toe-tapping variety. Always one to surprise, Wranitzky suddenly interposes a short baroque style oratorio section in the middle of things. It does not last long but it adds additional flavor to an already saucy dish. Highly recommended for concert and to amateur players.

Op.16 No.2 in E flat Major begins with a lively *Allegro non troppo*. The main subject is fetching. The middle movement *Andante con variazione* has a lovely theme and several contrasting and effective variations, including one given to the cello which takes it from its lowest to its treble register. The finale, *Tempo di Minuetto, grazioso*, although quite nice and something which was not uncommon in the 18th century is not real exciting ending we have come to expect in a finale. For that reason I only recommend this good work to amateurs

Op.16 No.3 in D Major begins with a genial but fairly ordinary *Allegro moderato*. This is followed by a *Poco adagio* which is decent but nothing special. The finale, *Allegro non troppo*, in 6/8 again is a solid movement but not terribly inspired. I would give this one a miss.

The *Allegro non troppo* of **Op.16 No.4 in F Major** starts off promising and keeps its promise. Lively and with appealing melodic material. The *Andante sostenuto* which serves as the middle movement is closer to an *Adagio*. Beautiful long lined vocal melodies. The bustling finale, *Rondo non presto*, is Haydnesque and effective. Good enough for concert and home.

Op.16 No.5 in C Major begins with a stately *Allegro non troppo*. It is charming and here the cello is given some nice solo passages. There is a Mozartean quality to the music is more elegant and graceful than exciting. Still quite a nice movement. An *Andante sostenuto* is the middle movement. The violin is given a lovely solo to an effective accompaniment and the whole thing has a serenade-like feel. The finale, *Allegro*, immediately captures one's attention with its pizzicato opening. The music is playful and full of forward motion with the cello offered some quick passage work. Good for concert and home.

Op.16 No.6 in d minor begins with an orchestral *Allegro vivace*. It takes a while to get going. There is a bit of *sturm und*

drang excitement. The themes are decent but not better than that. Next is a lovely, Mozartean *Poco adagio*. The finale, *Allegro di molto*, fulfills what one expects of a finale in a minor key. There is drama and excitement. Because of the rather ordinary first movement, I am hesitant to recommend this quartet for concert performance, but certainly is a good choice for amateurs.

Paul Wranitzky's **String Quartet in C Major, Op.23 No.1**, was the first of a set of six commissioned by the cello-playing King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II. The same King for whom Mozart and Haydn wrote quartets and Beethoven composed his Op.5 cello sonatas. The Op.23 Quartets date from 1793 and were first published by André in Offenbach. The cello parts to these quartets, like those of the quartets which Mozart and Haydn wrote for the King, are more prominent than was normal for that period. It may well be that the King was familiar with Wranitzky's Op.16 quartets, discussed above, in which the cello is very generously treated and decided he could use others like them. While Haydn and Mozart raised the cello to an almost equal voice within the quartet, they avoided giving it virtuoso solo passages. Wranitzky, however, perhaps because he never really abandoned the concertante style of composition, did in fact write such solos which can be found in all six of his Op.23. The quartet follows the general pattern established by Haydn--Fast, Slow, Minuet and Fast. The opening *Allegro con spirito* can perhaps be styled as a perfect example of the Viennese classical concertante quartet of the late 18th century. With extensive running solo passages for each voice, the music moves forward effortlessly. A lovely *Adagio* follows. The third movement, *Menuetto, un poco allegretto*, is rather unusual with the cello and viola playing continuous triplets beginning in their lowest registers and proceeding upwards against the two violins with a more sustained theme. In the trio section, the cello is taken from its depths to the heights with a running 8th part against a chirpy violin melody. A buoyant *Allegro scherzo* finishes off this fine work. A good choice for concert and home. And as with all of Wranitzky's quartets a technically secure first violinist, and in the Op.23, cellist is a must.

Op.23 No.4 in E flat Major begins with an *Allegro moderato* is not terribly inspired.. The second movement, is actually two movements in one. It begins with a lovely, warm *Adagio*. But wrapped in the middle of it is a *Menuetto*, complete with trio. At its end, the *Adagio* reappears and concludes the movement. An energetic and playful *Rondo* brings the work to a close. It is decent but nothing special. Given the number of superior quartets by Wranitzky, I see no point in spending time with this one.

Op.23 No.5 in G Major opens with an orchestral *Allegro*. The *Poco adagio* which comes next starts off sounding like a cello concerto and in fact the solo given to the cello goes on for rather a long time. This is an interesting movement. A Haydnesque *Menuetto, allegretto* comes third. The finale, another of Wranitzky's 6/8 *Rondo* finishes off this work. Okay for amateurs.

Op.23 No.6 in F Major begins with a short, very nicely written *Grave, adagio*. Not much longer than a substantial introduction, it sort of fulfills that function. The middle movement is a big *Allegro di molto*. It is rather orchestral and the thematic material is not particularly strong. The finale, *Allegro con variazione* has a theme on which decent variations are made. Can be recommended to amateurs but not for concert.

Op.40 No.3 in E flat Major is the last of a set of three composed sometime between 1794 and 1797. The opening movement is a lovely, deeply felt superb *Adagio*. The middle movement, a *Presto*, is full of forward motion, excitement and with moving passages in all of the voices. The finale is a genial, dance like *Rondo*. Decent but one could have hoped for more excitement. Still good enough for concert and for amateur ensembles.

Riccardo Zandonai (1883-1944). Zandonai was born in what was, until 1919, the Austrian province of South Tyrol, however, his musical training took place in Italy at the Pesaro Conservatory



where he studied with Mascagni among others. Zandonai was drawn toward opera and most of his compositions are for that medium. Today, if he is known at all, it is for his opera *Francesca da Rimini*.

His **String Quartet in G Major** is one of the few instrumental works which he composed. It dates from 1904. It is a substantial and rather engaging work. The opening *Allegro moderato* starts calmly and slowly builds momentum and tension until it finally reaches a powerful climax which is a re-statement in the minor of the main theme. In the major, it is quite pleasant, almost inoffensive, but in the minor it has a highly dramatic and almost threatening quality. The instrumental writing is very assured and in fine quartet style with many clever touches, such as the very effective use of *pizzicato*. The second movement, *Presto*, is a jolly scherzo into which Zandonai periodically throws a tiny bit of dissonance, which he immediately resolves. It is rather like driving quickly over a speed bump. The slower trio section is of considerable weight and has a somewhat threatening and dour quality but makes a greater impression than the scherzo. The slow movement, a big *Adagio*, is clearly the quartet's center of gravity. The work unfolds in a leisurely fashion but the mood is nearly always tense, especially during the densely written dramatic climaxes. The energetic finale, *Allegro*, features thrusting peasanter melodies. This is a good work, deserving concert performance and which can be recommended to good amateurs.

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Eric Zeisl (1905-1959) was yet another talented Viennese composer of Jewish heritage chased from his homeland as a result of the Nazi Anschluss. Born in 1905, Zeisl's childhood years were spent in a Vienna, which was still the undisputed world capital of Music, where Mahler and then Weingartner were the directors of the Vienna opera. Zeisl entered the Vienna State Academy at age 14 to study

composition. Within two years, he had published a set of songs and, by 1938 when he was forced to flee, he had already been recognized as one of Austria's best living composers, having, four years earlier, won the Austrian State Prize for his *Requiem Concertante*. Stopping first in Paris, Zeisl continued on to America and settled near Los Angeles where he spent the rest of his life as a teacher. Though he won the praise of such eminent men as Milhaud, Stravinsky and Toch, success came slowly in his adopted country and it was only toward the end of his life, which was cut short by a heart attack, that he began to make a name for himself. Primarily a composer of vocal music, he wrote two string quartets. The first has been lost.

His **String Quartet No.2 in d minor** dates from 1952-3. It begins with a gripping *Pesante*, *Allegro*. The theme of only four notes is played in unison by all four voices: D-F, C-D, the rhythm is a 16th to a dotted half. The feel is late Beethoven updated by a century. Later, a quick Hungarian "travelling music" theme is introduced of the type one encounters in Kodaly. In the second movement, the muted first violin begins the lovely *Andante* with its faintly Hebraic melody beneath the hushed accompaniment of the others. The tonalities are advanced. In the *Scherzo-allegretto* which follows a relentless two 8th note, two quarter note rhythm is, while not atonal, almost devoid of melody. It is this rhythm alone that gives it a New World kind of restlessness, of the son Europeans always felt in the 1920s when first arriving in New York. The trio section, with its jazz-like melancholy melodies stands in stark contrast. One hears tinges of Milhaud's *Le Creation du Monde*. The lively *Rondo vivace* which concludes the quartet, has a captivating upbeat, jazzy theme, a la New York, rhythmically challenging and perhaps something Bartok might have written for quartet had he been commissioned to write at the

same time he produced his *Concerto for Orchestra*. This quartet deserves to be heard in concert and can be recommended to experienced amateur ensemble players.



Wladyslaw Zelenski (sometimes Ladislav 1837-1921) was born in Grodkowice not far from the city of Cracow. After studying piano locally with several teachers, including the well-known concert pianist Alexander Dreyschok, he went to Prague University where he took a doctorate in philosophy. He also took composition lessons from Josef Krejčí after which he enrolled in the Paris

Conservatory where he continued his composition lessons with Henri Reber. Upon his return to Poland he enjoyed a long career as a concert pianist, teacher and composer. He held several important teaching posts including Director of the Cracow Conservatory which he helped to found. He left a number of chamber music works, including the two string quartets

String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.28 was composed in 1885. The work begins with an unassuming *Allegro*. There is little in the way of passion, drama or excitement. On the other hand, the music is pleasant. One does not quite get the feeling that the themes are threadbare because they are treated very creatively, although there is no question that the music could certainly have benefited from stronger material. As it is, it might have made an acceptable movement for a chamber orchestral suite. As the themes are developed we can hear the influence of late Beethoven. The second movement is a theme and set of variations. The theme is a somber Polish folk melody. The variations are rather good and original, making this perhaps the best movement of the work. Next comes a *Scherzo* that is playful and highly rhythmic. The thematic material, which sounds vaguely Italian, is satisfactory but by no means great. The finale, *Allegro molto e con brio*, is, until the appearance of the second theme, dominated more by its rhythm than the melodic material. The striking, lyrical second theme has a rather Neapolitan tinge, especially because of its rhythm. Not at all a bad movement. This is a decent quartet but it is short on drama and excitement. I would keep it out of the concert hall but recommend it to amateurs.

String Quartet No.2 in A Major, Op.42 was composed six years later in 1891. The first movement, *Allegro con brio*, is reasonably good. It is basically genial, again with an Italian sound to it. An *Intermezzo*, *Allegro non troppo e scherzando*, follows. Clever and well, written, the thematic material holds one's interest. The third movement is a very lengthy *Molto cantabile*. Nicely crafted, the melodic writing is fine but not particularly memorable and certainly does not justify the length. I found myself losing attention. In the finale, *Allegro molto vivace*, Zelenski resorts to a lot of forward motion but it does not hide the rather pedestrian melodic material he uses. To conclude, these are not bad quartets and I was happy to have had the chance to play them but they do not, outside of Poland, deserve to be played in concert, although I think amateurs will find them enjoyable.

Julius Zellner (1832-1900) was born in Vienna and lived most of his life in that city. His family steered him towards a business career but he changed courses early on and by the mid 1850s was working as a piano teacher and composer in Vienna. He was the winner of the prestigious Vienna Composers Society Prize of 1887 and of the coveted Beethoven Prize of 1889. Among the judges who found his works worthy of these prizes were none other than Johannes Brahms and Robert Fuchs. It is no exaggeration to say that Zellner and his music were held in the highest esteem during the last two decades of the 19th century and up to the First World War. Yet today, his name and his music have all but disappeared, like those of so many other fine composers whose music was unfairly shoved in oblivion in the reaction

against all things from the Romantic era after World War I. There are at least 50 published works including symphonies, a piano concerto and a considerable amount of chamber music, including two string quartets. I am not familiar with the first.

The **String Quartet No.2 in d minor, Op.34** dates from 1886 and won the prestigious first prize of the Vienna Composers Society in 1887. The exciting opening movement, *Allegro con brio*, begins calmly with a series of double stops which are immediately followed by the introduction of the dramatic and hard-driving first theme. The second movement, *Allegretto*, is a lovely, gentle intermezzo, however the contrasting and turbulent trio section is a surprise. Next comes a heart felt *Adagio*. The finale, *Allegro molto*, bears much in common with the first movement with its propulsive and exciting main theme. The contrasting and lyrical second subject recalls a similar melody from Smetana's piano trio. This prize-winning work is sure to go over well in the concert hall, but best of all, it presents no technical difficulties and can be heartily recommended to amateurs.



During his lifetime, **Alexander Zemlinsky** (1871-1942) was very highly regarded not only as a composer but also as a teacher and conductor. His works are an authentic testimony of the turbulent developments in music between 1890 and 1940. He stands between times and styles but in this intermediary position he found a rich, unmistakable, musical language.

His personality and work epitomize one of the most fascinating epochs of art in Europe. Zemlinsky was born in Vienna. His musical talent became evident at an early age and he was enrolled at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde Konservatorium when he was 13 years old. There he studied piano and composition. He was greatly influenced by Johannes Brahms, who at the time was serving as President of the Gesellschaft. Brahms thought highly enough of the young man's compositional abilities to recommend Zemlinsky's Op.3 Clarinet Trio, written shortly after graduating, to his own publisher Simrock for publication. About this time, Zemlinsky also met Arnold Schoenberg. The two became close friends. Zemlinsky gave Schoenberg lessons in counterpoint, thus becoming the only formal music teacher Schoenberg would have. Later, Schoenberg married Zemlinsky's sister. By 1900, Zemlinsky was firmly established as an important, though not a leading, musical figure in Vienna. He worked both as a composer and conductor. However, though he did well, he was unable to achieve the major success he had hoped for and therefore left for Prague in 1911. In Prague, he held the important post of opera conductor of the Deutsches Landestheater until 1927. He became well-known as a perceptive interpreter of Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler, and Schoenberg. In 1927, he moved to Berlin to take up a position as a conductor of a major opera house. In 1933, he returned to Vienna where he remained until 1938, before emigrating to New York. He wrote four string quartets. Nos.3 and 4 are 12 tone or atonal and are beyond the scope of this guide.

String Quartet No.1 in A Major, Op.4 dates from 1896 and is unquestionably one of the most important quartets written before the advent of the Second Vienna School and 12 tone music. In this work, Zemlinsky has freed himself from much of Brahms' influence, which can only really be felt in some of his use of rhythm. The bright *Allegro con fuoco* opens almost abruptly. Characterized by highly accented and syncopated rhythms, a more lyrical second theme smooths some of the rough edges away. The main theme to the second movement, *Allegretto*, is a naive, and simple folk melody. Suddenly, a stormy middle section full of excitement and interesting rhythms blossoms forth into a wild and ferocious gypsy dance. The third movement, *Breit und Kraftig*, is exactly as described by the title, broad and

powerful. The theme thrusts forth only to proceed in a rather soft and diffident fashion, leading to a lovely and highly romantic second subject. The heroic and buoyant finale, *Vivace e con fuoco*, is full of original thematic ideas and wonderfully executed. This quartet belongs in the repertoire, however, it is still well within the reach of experienced amateurs.

String Quartet No.2, Op.15 is an extremely turbulent work. Within its single movement, one may easily recognize the outline of a four-movement quartet, with an *Adagio* and a *Scherzo* framing two complex outer movements. Each section is subdivided into several shorter parts, each with different tempi, harmonies and character. The work opens quietly with a three-note motto (D-E-G) which can be heard again and again in various forms throughout the entire piece. Eventually, the music explodes with of passion and energy, but finally calms and turns into a tender slower episode. Then comes a frenetic, nervous episode which in turns leads to an *Adagio*. Eventually, the music rises to highly emotional climax and then dies back. The following section is for all intents and purposes a *Scherzo*. The final section brings back subjects from the first and the second sections lurching from one dramatic passage to another, full of fury and violence, before softly ending in an ethereal fashion. A historically important work. Highly original and thought provoking, it professionals who bring it to concert will not be disappointed by their audiences. It is beyond all but the best amateur players.



Nikolaus Zmeskall (1759-1833 Mikuláš Zmeškal in the Hungarian form) was one of Beethoven's best, if not his best friend. Zmeskall came from a minor Hungarian noble family and was born in the tiny village of Lestiny in present day Slovakia, then under the control of Hungary. He was sent to Vienna at the age of ten to study at the Theresianum, an elite training school for Austrian civil servants and diplomats. At the same time, he studied cello with the famous Austrian virtuoso Anton Kraft, for whom Haydn had written a concerto. Zmeskall reached quite a high level as a performer and sometimes filled in for Kraft in the Schuppanzigh String Quartet, which premiered most of Beethoven's string quartets. Zmeskall's day job was working in the Hungarian Chancellery in Vienna as a civil servant. His nights were devoted to either playing or going to chamber music concerts, which is how he met Beethoven. Many of Beethoven's chamber music works were premiered in Zmeskall's home and the two became fast friends. From time to time he and Beethoven played together. Beethoven dedicated the Duet for Two Eyeglasses for Viola and Cello for the two of them to play on the occasion of them both needing to wear glasses. He also dedicated his Op.95 String Quartet and his Choral Fantasy to Zmeskall. (Haydn dedicated his Op.20 "Sun Quartets" to him) Zmeskall, for his part, often helped Beethoven finding servants, purchasing quills for writing music and many other things. More than 160 letters from Beethoven to Zmeskall have survived. Zmeskall was also a composer of chamber music and has more than a dozen string quartets to his credit. He began composing quartets as early as 1776 and continued writing them up until about 1810. Only one that I know of has been published and that only recently. Four of the later quartets have been recorded from copies made from the manuscripts which exist in the library of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde of Vienna. I am familiar with three.

Edition Silvertrust published his **String Quartet in d minor**, which is one of the earliest, if not the first of his quartets and dates from the late 1770s. In only two movements, *Allegro* and *Rondeau allegro*. As such, the quartet appear to be the equal of what Mozart and Haydn were doing at that time as well. The *Rondeau* has a distinct Hungarian flavor. This is a short work of

historical interest suitable for amateur players.

String Quartet in g minor dates from the around 1810. It is one of the most substantial of his quartets and one of two he made arrangements to have published with Beethoven's encouragement but which in the end were not. The opening movement begins with a slow introduction Adagio in which all of the themes of the main section of the movement appear. It leads to an allegro, which has many interesting features including long lead passages for each voice, but it is not written in concertante style. The attractive second movement, Adagio, shows the influence of Beethoven and to a lesser extent Haydn. Here the first violin and cello engage in lengthy and effective dialog recalling Beethoven's Op.18 style. A very fine movement. Next is a Menuetto, allegro. It is not your typical classical Viennese minuet, but is more romantic and lyrical and really does not, despite the time signature, sound much like one. The finale, Allegro, in 6/8 is well-written and sounds Schubertian. Of course, Zmeskall could not have been familiar with anything Schubert wrote because at that time, he had not written anything. This quartet could be performed in concert and recommended to amateurs.

His **String Quartet in D Major** opens in the same way as the g minor quartet, that is with an Adagio introduction followed by an Allegro. This quartet also dates from between 1805-1810. Beethoven also encouraged Zmeskall to publish this quartet as well. The Adagio is quite substantial, perhaps too long in that it does not really build any tension or expectation of what is to come. The Allegro is genial, solidly written but not particularly memorable. Second comes a Menuetto, allegro molto. The tempo marking is somewhat misleading. It cannot be played all that fast. Another decent movement, but nothing that strikes one as memorable. Third is an Adagio, again, nothing wrong with it but nothing in it sticks with you. The finale, Allegretto, is pleasant but forgettable. There is no reason to spend any time with this one.

The **String Quartet in G Major** is only in three movements and judging from this and the style, was composed earlier than either of the two above quartets. Stylistically, there are resemblances to Carl Stamitz and the Mannheim School. The first movement, marked Andante, starts off with an attractive march-like subject. Once it gets going, however, the tempo is much closer to an Allegro. The middle movement, is a somewhat slow, stately Minuetto, sounding a bit like a French rococo minuet. The short trio section is rather attractive. The finale, Allegro moderato, is pleasant but not quite up to the quality of the first two movements. It can, however, be recommended to amateurs.



Vasily Zolotarev (1872-1964) was born in the Russian city of Taganrog. He studied at the St Petersburg Conservatory with Rimsky-Korsakov and Mily Balakirev. He taught at the Moscow Conservatory for a number of years and then in Belarusian Academy of Music in Minsk. He composed in most genres and was especially fond of chamber music. Through Rimsky Korsakov, Zolotarev became part of the so-called Belaiev Circle, named for those composers, mostly Korsakov's students, whose music was published by Mikhail Petrovich Belaiev, a lumber millionaire who founded and funded a publishing company for the sole purpose of supporting Russian composers and propagating their music. He wrote five string quartets. I am not familiar with the fifth.

String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.5 was composed in 1901. It opens with a dark theme in the Allegro moderato. The second subject is lighter and more lyrical. Next comes an Andantino in waltz tempo. One hears echoes of the canzonetta from Tchaikovsky's violin concerto. The third movement is a scherzo, Allegro, nicely written but the rhythm makes ensemble playing

difficult. The finale, Allegro, features a march-like melody for the main theme. Here good use of the cello is made. A solid work which can be recommended for home music makers.

String Quartet No.2 in a minor, Op.6 which dates from 1902 was dedicated to Belaiev who published it. It is not hard to play. A somewhat ominous Andante introduction leads to the main section of the opening movement, Allegro. The themes are clearly based on Russian folk melody, perhaps recalling songs about the Volga. The second movement, Intermezzo begins with a short Andante introduction which leads to a graceful Andantino with a somewhat slower and warm blooded middle section. The Andante which comes next, though it does not plumb the depths nonetheless is full of sincere feeling. The finale, Allegro vivace bustles along full of lyrical melodies. Good for concert and for amateur ensembles.

String Quartet No.3 in D Major, Op.25 was completed in 1908. The opening movement is in four sections—Allegro ma non troppo, In tempo poco più animato, In tempo di mazurka and then Allegro ma non troppo. This is a quite a good movement. An poetic and somewhat melancholy air hovers over the Andantino which follows and impresses by virtue of its original sounding rhythm. The rhythm of the scherzo, Presto, which comes next is also noteworthy. The slower trio section is a charming waltz. The finale, Allegro con brio, is a rousing roof raiser. Another good choice for concert and recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.4 in b flat minor, Op.33 was completed in 1913 and dedicated to the Russian composer Sergei Taneyev. It is only in two movements. The first movement, Allegro furio, is a kind of rough funeral march. The second subject is more attractive but putting it together is not easy and really requires more than one play through. The second movement, Thema con variazione. The theme is an Andantino con moto. Ten variations follow. each very different, there is one which is a scherzo, another a slow movement and so on. The finale variation is a stunning Quasi Polacca. Certainly a choice for the concert hall. As for amateurs, it requires players of considerable ensemble experience.

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