



The Cobbett Association for Chamber Music Research

6827 Roxbury Dr. Sarasota, Fl. 34231 Tel. 813-922-6986

Pro Arte Quartet Celebrates 50th Anniversary at U. of Wis.



**Left to Right: Norman Paulu, 1st violin;
Richard Blum, Viola; Jae Kim, 2nd violin;
Parry Karp, cello**

The Pro Arte Quartet, which recently expressed a strong interest in the Cobbett Association, is celebrating its 50th anniversary at the University of Wis. this year.

Founded by a group of Belgians in 1912, the quartet has the distinction of being the oldest string quartet in continuous existence in the world, and the first quartet-in-residence at an American University.

In 1926, the quartet made its debut in N.Y. and toured the U.S. It returned for 30 tours in America, often under the auspices of Mrs. E.S. Coolidge, noted patron of chamber music.

As the members were about to walk onto stage, to perform their 3rd concert in 1940 at the U. of Wis. (Madison), the institution's president appeared and announced that Belgium had been invaded by the Nazis and it was his hope that the quartet's members would not have to return to their besieged homeland. He asked the group to stay on the Wisconsin campus as artists-in-residence. Gifts from four citizens made this possible.

(Editor's note: Your Coordinator, then a student at Wis. was attending the above concert when the dramatic announcement was made.)

The group tours nationally and internationally, and records extensively. It often premieres new works, many of which were written for it, and constantly "rediscovers" neglected or lost works and alternate versions. In the past, such giants as Bartok, Milhaud, and Barber have written works for it.

Contemporary composers whose works have been premiered by or written for the Pro Arte include Andrew Imbrie, Gunther Schuller, Fred Lerdahl, Paul Lansky, Stephen Dambski, Tamar Diesendruck, Tadeus Salva, David Noon, George Edwards, Martin Boykan, Charles Porter and Samuel Adler.

Noted Cellist, Varga, Visits Cobbett Association

Laszlo Varga, noted cellist and conductor, visited the Cobbett Assn. on Feb. 26 and indicated considerable interest in its research work. Varga, now a winter resident of Sarasota, gave an unaccompanied recital for an overflow audience at Pelican Cove on Feb. 24. The audience was thrilled with his performance of a Bach sonata and the famous Kodaly sonata.

Two of our local members, Dr. Fred Somach and Albert Appel, had the privilege of playing chamber music with Mr. Varga before he returned to the west coast to resume his teaching and performing.

Varga was principle cello soloist with the N.Y. Philharmonic for 11 years. He also toured as cellist with the Lener and Canadian String Quartets. He has also been a professor of music at the U. of Toronto and the San Francisco State College.



APPRECIATION EXPRESSED

Thanks to those members who have already sent in contributions for the year 1991. It takes the financial support of our members to make our research program possible, and contributions of any amount are always gratefully received.

Palm Strings Quartet Begins Fourth Year

The Palm Strings Quartet of Sarasota, FL, began its fourth year of study and evaluation of rare, neglected chamber music in 1991.

Its members, Dr. Herbert Fiss and Robert Maas, violins; Ann Edelson, viola; and Elizabeth Martin, cello, serve on the Association's Advisory Council, and handle most of the evaluation work for the group's research program.

Abandon Not Thy Precious Turntable!

It appears that compact discs are taking over the recording market -- but not entirely. Only about 10% of LP records are being transferred to compact discs, according to the experts. That means there are millions of LPs that will be found only through used record dealers, private collectors, and at record shows.

Because of this, chamber music players with sizeable collections of favorite LPs should think twice before giving up their turntables and records. They may regret it if they do.

Flute Fever in Arizona!

It has come to our attention that a condition exists in Arizona diagnosed as "Flute Fever". It may exist elsewhere and is probably contagious.

Bob and Dorothy Martin, our members in Tucson who are accomplished flute players, recently reported: "Even though you evaluate string music, we are interested because we play much violin music on the flute. Though we have over 100 flute and string quartets, we love to sight-read the string quartets and trios. One problem is finding the violin music that is most playable on the flute."

Bravo, friends, for your interest in reading string music for new experiences.

Who is going to object to missing a few double stops, some low notes, and an occasional pizzicato. Only the purists, of course. Obviously, some quartets don't lend themselves to this treatment, but many do, and if enjoyment comes from this practice, that is what is important.

Now we are wondering how many of the ardent flautists in Merrie Olde England are exploiting all these possibilities because we know that many of our English friends never miss an opportunity to explore neglected chamber music. And the Cobbett tradition carries on.

Manhattan String Quartet Announces Chamber Music Conf.

The Manhattan String Quartet announces its third annual chamber music conference in Kent, Conn., June 17-23. It offers experienced amateur, professional and semi-professional string players the opportunity to spend seven gratifying days playing chamber works in an informal atmosphere, and attending master classes and concerts by the artist-faculty. Both individual musicians and pre-formed string quartets are welcome. To ensure close contact between the faculty and the participants, attendance at the Conference will be limited to 72 adult instrumentalists.

Members of the quartet are Eric Lewis and Roy Lewis, violins; John Dexter, viola; and Judith Glyde, cello.

For an application, write Manhattan String Quartet Enterprises, Inc., RFD 4 Laurelton Rd., Mt. Kisco, NY 10549.

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Piano Quartet Research Underway

Another combination which is increasing in popularity with chamber music players is that of piano, violin, viola, and cello. Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Dvorak, and Faure all contributed frequently played masterpieces to the piano quartet literature. But many of the non-standard ones suffer from neglect and are of such merit that they deserve attention. Some of these are listed below with the estimated level of difficulty and musical value rating, followed by a brief description. Later, as research progresses, a more complete listing will be published as an insert to a newsletter.

BRIDGE, Frank (1879-1941) English. Phantasy Quartet in F# minor. His most successful fantasy work in 1 movement. Commissioned by W. W. Cobbett. Moderate - Excellent

CHAUSSON, E. (1855-1890) French. Qt in A, Op. 30. Important work in skillful cyclic form shows him at his peak. The Calm movement is unequalled in unforgettable sorrow. (see Cobbett book for detailed analysis) Difficult - Excellent

HOWELLS, Herbert (1892-1983) English. Qt. in A min, Op. 21. Won a Carnegie Award. True chamber music, 3 movts. Very melodious. Eng. folk tunes used. Striking modulations and much use of 5th interval. Difficult-Excellent.

HURLSTONE, Wm. (1876-1906) English. Qt in E min, Op. 43. Regarded his best work. Strong rhythms & charming melodies. Brahmsian with originality. Moderate - Excellent

LEKEU, G. (1870-1894) Belgian. B minor. His last will and testament. Two mvmts, 2nd finished by d'Indy. Expresses sorrow and love with flowing melodies in his rom. Belgian style. Moderate - V.G.

NOVAK, V. (1870-1949) Czech. Qt. in C min, Op. 7. Short, concise work not of great depth but delightful to play. Slovakian melodies beginning with expressive, flowing andante, then a scherzino & a simple and charming rondo. Moderate - V.G.

REGER, Max (1873-1916) German. Qt in A min, Op. 133. More serene and placid than his other works. Post-Brahmsian style with Reger's brand of chromaticism. Not beyond grasp of advanced amateurs. Diff.-Excel.

TANETEV, S. (1856-1915) Russian. Qt in E Op 20. By a master of counterpoint. Uses classic form in this very rom. 3 mvmt. work with brilliant pf work and well divided string parts. Difficult - Excellent.

TURINA, J. (1882-1949) Spanish. Qt. in C min (1931) Very atmospheric with Spanish flavor. Uses the free singing style of the Gypsies and Andalusians. Agreeable dissonances and interesting parts for all four. Moderate - Excellent

WALTON, Wm. (1902-) English. Qt. Won Carnegie Award in 1924. Shows maturity for an early work. Beautiful, noble, and transparent in texture. Difficult - Excellent

ACMP Mourns Loss of Ruth McGregor

Ruth Hill McGregor, 82, one of the founders of the Amateur Chamber Music Players, Inc., died suddenly on Feb. 18 at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Ctr. in New York City. Ruth served as treasurer of the ACMP for many years and also as chairman for several years.

She was a cellist and teacher at the School for Strings in N.Y., having joined the faculty there in 1975. "Ruth created and directed a chamber music department that reflected high professional standards of performance, and instilled in the students a deep love for chamber music. In our view, there is probably no one in the U.S. who has done more for chamber music for young people and who has done it so well as Ruth McGregor," stated the school's director.

A memorial service for Ruth will be held on Sunday, April 7, 1991 at 2:30 P.M. at Riverside Church in New York City.

Rare Chamber Music Available

One of our enthusiastic members in Canada, James Whitby (violinist and violist) is a long-time collector of rare and out-of-print chamber music. He notified us that he has duplicates to trade or sell, and would be happy to correspond with anyone who is interested. His address is 1551 Ryersie Road, London, ON N6G 2S2, Canada.



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

LETTERS

Following are excerpts from some of the letters received recently:

Thank you very much for sending me your newsletter. Bravo to you for setting up this new organization. It is a worthy addition to the world of chamber music which will provide a much-needed service in our drive to bring more and better chamber music to our audiences....

Norman Paulu, 1st Vln.
Pro Arte Qt.
Univ. of Wis.(Madison)

Many, many thanks for your Newsletter No.2 and part 1 of list of non-standard string quartets. I declare myself most impressed with the work you are doing and willingly enclose my contribution to your expenses for the year 1991. Please make no apology for lack of fancy artwork, etc. We need clear facts on neglected chamber music and a "slick" publication would be a waste of valuable resources

Andrew Marshall
Grimsby, England

Thank you for your splendid Newsletter No. 2 and list which includes many quartets unknown to me -- which of course is the point....I've been waiting a long time for something like the Cobbett Association. Thanks for starting it.

Dr. Nick Cunningham
New York City

Congratulations on your program! I found your first listing of non-standard quartets of considerable interest...and I would appreciate it if you would put my name on the mailing list....

Dr. Wm. J. Hall
San Miguel Allende, Mex.

A note in the STRAD drew my attention to your founding the Cobbett Assn. I congratulate you and wish the Assn. every success....Many thanks for your newsletter and list of S.Q. All very interesting and encouraging. Yes, please keep me on your mailing list....It is extraordinary how restricted the current concert and amateur repertoire is when one thinks of the wealth of music composed over the centuries....

Morris Sinclair
Cartigny, Switzerland

I'd like to request that you do me the kindness of entering me as an enthusiastic recipient of any material regarding unusual chamber music....Both as pianist and music typesetter, I have devoted my life to study, performance, and teaching of unusual and neglected music. But, as you know, it's a real struggle inasmuch as most players, both professional and amateur, tenaciously cling to the tried and true to the exclusion of anything unfamiliar...

Melvin Wildberger
Nevada City, Calif.

We have seen the report about the Cobbett Assn in the ACMP newsletter. A group of us here are also very interested in finding and playing unusual and often neglected music, especially 2 viola quintets. I enclose a list of the chamber music we know and have played. If you know of any viola quintets not on our list, please let us know.

Dr. Alan West
Leads, England

Hearing of your Cobbett Assn for Chamber Music Research, I wish to be put on your mailing listCould you share some of the unfamiliar yet enjoyable titles with me?...In turn, I will pass this information on to our group, Chamber Musicians of Northern California. We put on 3 week-end workshops per year and are always looking for new and unfamiliar works.

Adrienne Casco
Sebastopol, CA

Congratulations on the formation of your new chamber music research group and best wishes for every success with it. You were quite right to have remembered chamber literature as an area that interests me greatly. I was extremely pleased to learn of the new association. In fact, I took the liberty of sending copies of your first newsletter to a few selected friends who share in our mutual interest. I liked your first working newsletter (No.2) and was especially pleased with the inserted list of evaluations and the background information on availability....

Dr. Bill Simmons
Woods Hole, MA.

COMING IN JULY NEWSLETTER:

The Lark Quartet
The Historic Pasquier Trio
Stenhammar's Accomplishments
Piano Quintets to Explore
Part 3 - Non-standard String Quartets