



The Cobbett Association for Chamber Music Research

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

Unique Mission of Mirecourt Trio: Introducing New and Forgotten Chamber Works

The Mirecourt Trio, now in its 19th year, is of special interest to the Cobbett Association, not only because of the trio's membership in our organization, but also because of the mission its founders set for it at its beginning.

As stated in a letter by Terry King, the trio's cellist, that goal has been "not only to present the established masterworks in a new and, whenever possible, informed manner, but also to resurrect important older works unknown to the mainstream, as well as to regularly commission new works." We applaud these superb musicians for their outstanding success in fulfilling this three-way goal.

The Mirecourt Trio (pronounced MEER-koor) was founded in 1973 while its members served on the faculty of California State University, Fullerton. They took their name from the town of Mirecourt, France, a violin and bow making center beginning in the early 17th century. In 1975, they became artists-in-residence at Grinnell College, Iowa, where they have been based ever since.

The Mirecourt Trio has become one of the world's most cherished and respected ensembles — for their superb command of the classic piano trio repertoire, for their adventurousness in introducing "forgotten" works little known to the general public, and for commissioning more than forty new works by contemporary composers. The Mirecourt was the first piano trio invited to the People's Republic of China where they taught master classes as well as giving public concerts. They have also toured in Hong Kong, and Taiwan, as well as European countries and America. In addition, the trio's special magic has been brought to millions through radio and television broadcasts such as St. Paul Sunday Morning, Parkway, and Voice of America.

The trio has produced more than twenty recordings which have been enthusiastically received. The Village Voice selected the Mirecourt's recording of concertos by Lou Harrison and Paul Reale as "Record of the Year", and Stereo Review cited their recording of the Tchaikovsky Trio as a "Recording of Special Merit".

If you would like a free list of the Mirecourt's recorded works, send the Cobbett Association a stamped, self-addressed envelope.



Left to Right: Kenneth Goldsmith, violin;
John Jensen, piano; and Terry King, cello.

Montana's Chamber Music Festival One of the Best

It's time to be making plans for a summer chamber music conference. Please remember that one of the best — the Adult Chamber Music Festival of Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana — is headed by one of our Cobbett Association advisors, Mary Sanks. A retired university professor, Mary has been directing this conference for all of its past 21 years.

This year's conference will be June 18 to June 26, though arrangements can be made to come for a shorter period. Mary has planned an exciting week with 10 assignments in the seven days, daily forums, two faculty concerts, get-acquainted mixers, a family picnic, and a closing party. Plenty of time is allowed for free-lancing, too. Bozeman's proximity to Yellowstone National Park and other attractions makes it feasible to plan the conference as part of a family vacation. Family members may share your room and need not pay the conference fee. There is plenty for them to do while you make music.

The conference fee of \$210 covers all expenses except meals and lodging. Dorm rooms are \$16 per night and meals are available at reasonable prices on campus or in local restaurants.

For further information and application forms write Mary Sanks, ACMF, Music Dept., Montana State Univ., Bozeman, MT 39717-0008. Phone: 406-587-8220

We hope the Cobbett Association will be well represented at Bozeman in '92.

When Your Cellist is Missing . . .

If your string quartet's cellist is late, ill, or out of town, don't despair. There is a storehouse of chamber works for two violins and viola. In fact, our member, Ramona Matthews, violinist of Silver Springs, Md. has provided us with a list of almost 100 for us to share with our members.



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.

She writes, "The list is mostly the work of the late Henry Barrett, violist at the U. of Alabama and author of an authoritative work on his instrument. Mr. Barrett was kind enough to send me his list some years ago, and I have made a few additions based on holdings of the Library of Congress and some publishers' catalogs."

This list is not annotated, but is still valuable, and many of the works may be ordered through publishers or borrowed from music libraries.

Cobbett Association members may order a free copy of the list by sending us a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Finding Rare Music . . .

Several members have inquired about the technique of finding rare music, and we again refer them to the article in our Jan., 1991, Newsletter No. 2, entitled, "How to Find Rare Music". If you are missing this article, please send a self address stamped envelope and we will send you a free copy.

Coming Soon . . .

Feature on Taneiev — a neglected Russian master of valuable chamber music.

A story on one of the greatest achievers — The Manhattan String Quartet.

Chamber music for flute and strings.

Villa-Lobos and his wealth of chamber music.

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The Georges Onslow Revival

Georges Onslow (1784-1853), Anglo-French composer, studied piano in England with Dussek and Cramer. He later returned to France, took up cello, studied theory and composition with Anton Reicha, and eventually became France's most prominent and prolific chamber music composer of the period. He was very popular because his chamber music was carefully designed for home music making.

Onslow's music follows the classical style, is scholarly and elegant, and has grace and dignity. There is much charm in his chamber music although the slow movements are lacking in deep feeling.

With the rise of the classical giants, Onslow's music was somewhat forgotten until revived in recent years by scholars and musicians who recognized its value.

Onslow composed 34 string quintets and 36 string quartets. With this volume, there is some repetition and uneven quality, so it is important to evaluate his works and sort out the best.

In recent years Onslow fans and scholars in Europe and the U.S. have made special efforts to research and preserve his music. This dedication has paid off with more and more groups enjoying his music.

Among Cobbett Association members who have been active in collecting and preserving Onslow's music for future generations to enjoy are R.H.R. Silvertrust, Drs. James and Margaret Whitby, Dr. Nicholas Cunningham, Dr. Bert and Veronica Jacobs, and Albert Novikoff.

String Quartets

Mr. Silvertrust is sharing his experiences in playing Onslow's string quartets by furnishing the accompanying chart wherein he rates the musical value using the Cunningham system, with No. 10 being the best. Mr. Silvertrust believes that at least 25 of the 36 string quartets deserve to be heard again in the concert hall.

String Quintets

For those with two violas, the following are highly recommended: Op. 34, Very Good; Op. 78, No. 1, Excellent; Op. 80, Very Good; Op. 82, Excellent.

Outstanding string quintets written for two cellos are Op. 68, No. 27; Op. 44, No. 19; Op. 72, No. 28; Op. 73, No. 29.



It must be pointed out, however, that the first cello part in these is written very high in the treble cleff at times, and the first cellist must have the ability to read the treble cleff down one octave.

It is unfortunate that very little of Onslow's chamber music has been recorded, but at least his music is being played more and more due to the dedication of the Cobbett Association members listed above.

Partial List of Onslow's S.Q.

No.1, Op 4 No.1	10 First Rate
No.2, Op 4 No.2	8 Good
No.3, Op 4 No.3	9 Very Good
No.4, Op.8 No.1	10 Very Fine
No.5, Op 8 No.2	6 Average
No.6, Op 8 No.3	9 Nice Work
No.7, Op 9 No.1	10 Choice
No.8, Op 9 No.2	10 Superb!
No.9, Op.9 No.3	7 All 1st VL
No.10, Op 10 No.1	10 First Rate
No.11, Op 10 No.2	10 Very Fine
No.12, Op 10 No.3	8 Good
No.13, Op 21 No.1	10 First Rate
No.14, Op 21 No.2	9 Very Good

Onslow's Music is Alive in Florida

During the first week of January, Dr. Bert and Veronica Jacobs, of New York City, and Drs. Jim and Margaret Whitby, of London, Ontario, Canada, visited the Sarasota-Bradenton area. They had a week of joyous quartet playing, and joined the Cobbett Association's Palm Strings Quartet for concentration on Onslow's two viola and two cello quintets. Great music making was reported!

Appreciating Max Reger's Chamber Music

Max Reger, (1873-1916) the great German composer, teacher, and performer, is usually classed as a post-Brahmsian romantic. He was considered a genius by Schoenberg and Hindemith, but today his music is sadly neglected. He was a master of counterpoint and the greatest German organist since Bach.

Prejudice to Reger's music can easily be overcome if the serious musician is willing to keep an open mind. Some dislike his music, which is dense and heavy going at times, while others find great satisfaction in it. Reger developed a highly original style of chromaticism and personal expression. Diligent study is the key to understanding Reger's world of sound which features striking originality, many beautiful melodies, and much charm and humor.

String Quartets

Reger's string quartets, although quite complex, are still accessible to amateurs who are willing to study the parts. The allegros offer well developed themes with lovely melodies woven in. The adagios offer a highly personal expression with strange and mysterious sounds that you never hear in other quartets. The lively scherzos have Reger's own special humor which can't be duplicated. When studying these string quartets, it is best to start with No. 5, F# minor, Op. 121. Its first allegro is a highly developed and passionate movement with charming melodies woven in. The profound adagio can bring tears to the eyes, and the scherzo moves at an incredible pace. (See Part 5 of string quartet evaluations for further descriptions of Reger quartets.)

Chamber Works with Piano

Pianists should not overlook Reger's chamber music for piano and strings which offers many challenges to players who desire to explore the literature. As a starter, the early trio for piano, violin, and viola Op. 2, offers no complexities and adds to the works for this unusual combination.

Reger's trio for piano, violin, and cello, Op. 102, is considered one of his best chamber works with piano.

In the piano quartet category (piano, violin, viola, and cello) the quartet in A minor, Op. 133, has been rated excellent by Reger enthusiasts and should be tried.

In the piano quintet category (piano, two violins, viola, and cello) the Op. 64, is not a convincing work and involves many ensemble problems for the players. A better choice is the quintet in C Minor, Op. 21 (posth), which is rated as very good, and which was inspired by the death of Brahms, who Reger worshipped.

Flute Delights

Flute players should try the two serenades for flute, violin, and viola, Op. 77a and 141a. These delightful lighter works are a joy to play, are not difficult, and offer much variety and interest.

String Trios

In trios for violin, viola, and cello, Reger offers two very worthwhile works, Op. 77b in A Minor, which is very cheerful and vivacious, and Op. 141b, a more difficult and dryer work which features interesting variations.

Clarinet Quintet

The quintet for clarinet and string quartet, Op. 146, was his last work, and should not be missed. It is original and contains much lyric beauty.

Sonatas for Cello and Piano

The Sonata No. 3 in F, Op. 78, and No. 4 in A Minor, Op. 116, are equal in value and highly recommended. (See Newsletter No. 5, page 4, for more details.)

String Sextet

Reger's Sextet for Strings, Op. 118, unfortunately, poses many problems for players and listeners alike. It is very dry, difficult, has ensemble and intonation problems, and therefore is not as successful as his other chamber works.

Recordings

Music lovers are fortunate to be able to hear Reger's chamber music on records. The Musical Heritage Society, using professional European groups, has recorded most of his works. Some are also found on the VOX label. This gives chamber music players the opportunity to listen to Reger's works before seeking the music for themselves.