



JOURNAL OF THE

COBBETT ASSOCIATION

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Editor: R.H.R. Silvertrust

AT THE DOUBLE BAR

Those of you who read the last issue of the *Journal* know that the Cobbett Association is in the midst of several changes since Bob Maas' passing last February. Not the least of these changes is a facelift to the old newsletter which has been transformed into the *Journal*. It will continue to bring you news of the Association as well as articles on chamber music research, but there will also be several new additions which we hope will become permanent features, among them: a Letters to the Editor section, a record review section and this column which will serve as an editorial section.

I must give credit for the title to this column which I filched from that marvellous book, *The Well Tempered String Quartet* by Bruno Aulich & Ernst Heimeran. They in turn lifted it from a 1924 article in the *Berliner Tageblatt* entitled "See You Again at the Double Bar" and written by a lawyer-violist by the name of Franz Anton Ledermann. Every chamber music player should have a copy of this wise and humorous book.

It is our intent that the Letters to the Editor section serve as a forum and means of communication between members. This is truly the members section so please do not hesitate to write with your questions, opinions and other information. We will also be soliciting your opinions as to subjects you wish to see in the *Journal*, as well as articles from the membership. In the next issue we will unveil our plan for rating works and publishing a definitive list.

This issue contains the 1994 membership renewal form. There are a lot of exciting things happening and I am sure that you will want to renew. The Association needs new members, please help to recruit your friends who would be interested.

THE COBBETT ASSOCIATION INCORPORATES, ENTERS CONTRACT TO BUY MAAS LIBRARY

As mentioned in the last issue of the *Journal*, plans to put the Association on a permanent footing are underway. We are pleased to report these objectives are moving ahead rapidly and that on July 24, 1994, the Association became a Illinois Corporation under the state Not for Profit Incorporation Act.

An application with the IRS for tax exempt status was filed on August 11, 1994. According to IRS officials it will take approximately 100-120 days to get an answer. While we are confident that the Association will obtain tax exempt status from the IRS, it should be noted that it could take longer than 120 days as the Service occasionally requires additional information from applicants. Having said this, we are hopeful that we will be able to report that we have tax exempt status before the year is out.

We are also pleased to report that in mid-July, David Canfield and Raymond Silvertrust visited Alice Maas, Robert Maas' wife, and entered into an agreement to purchase Bob's chamber music library on behalf of the Association for the sum of \$6,000.

At the moment, the Association actually has no money whatsoever available to it as it has not yet collected dues for 1994. Operating costs including the costs of incorporation and of the IRS user fee have been advanced to the Association by the directors. However, after dues are collected, the Association will have sufficient funds for the rest of this year.

We are not asking for contributions toward purchasing the library at this time because we do not have tax exempt status and donors cannot deduct such contributions made before we achieve it. Further, we will be asking the Amateur Chamber Music Players, Inc. for a grant

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THE STRING QUARTETS OF WILHELM STENHAMMAR

by R.H.R. Silvertrust

With this issue of the *Journal*, we will be launching a series of articles which give a more in depth coverage of composers and their works than those which have appeared in the past with a goal to providing readers with biographical, performance and recording information.

Stenhammar's quartets were briefly mentioned in Newsletter 4 (July 1991) and even more briefly in a listing of quartets (April 1992).

Having performed all six of his quartets, it is this writer's opinion

that this set is perhaps the most important written between those of Brahms and Bartok, and as such deserve a more detailed examination than they have heretofore received by us. I do not intend to suggest that there were no other quartets which appeared during this time that might not be considered as fine or more important than any of Stenhammar's, but his six quartets taken together 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

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COBBETT ASSOCIATION INCORPORATES, AGREES TO BUY MUSIC LIBRARY

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to help us purchase the library. We have been informed that any application by us for such a grant would be looked upon more favorably if we had tax exempt status at the time we applied.

Obtaining, maintaining and adding to a core library of rare and hard to find chamber music is a top priority of the Association. Not only will the library serve as a reference resource for our research, but more importantly, it will allow the Association to disseminate this music among amateur and professional players who desire to play it. That means those of you who have long wanted the music to some hard to obtain work will now be able to get it. Of course, no library has everything, but it is our goal to create, in the years to come, a world class collection of chamber music to serve our membership and the chamber music public at large.

The Maas library offers the Association a very good core library from which to build toward our goal. In it are approximately 750 non-standard chamber music works including string trios, string quartets, string quintets, string sextets, piano trios, piano quartets, and piano quintets. The library is strong in many areas but "thin on the ground" in others.

Bob Maas' library is not filled with first editions but primarily with copies that he made as he travelled around the country visiting important private collections and universities. Nonetheless, the work and effort involved in assembling such a library should not be underestimated and we are indeed lucky to have the opportunity to obtain it.

The agreement which we have entered into with Mrs. Maas provides for us to purchase this collection on or before March 1, 1995 for the sum of \$6,000.

While this is a large collection, there are many things which are missing that Bob either was never able to copy or that he did not know about or simply did not wish to obtain. We know that a few of our members have libraries which are as large and in some cases much larger than Bob's. There others who while not having such a large library do have many works which Bob did not. Therefore, we certainly will be encouraging the membership to help us add to the library by contributing copies of works which the Association does not have.

By now most of you would like to know just what is in the library. Space does not

permit me to give any meaningful glimpse of what is in it, although as soon as the acquisition is completed a list will be compiled and made available to those members who are interested.

Having said this, we will still tempt you a little. For example, we have hopefully whetted your desire to play the Stenhammar quartets. Not easy to obtain, not available in stores, not many libraries have copies. The Maas library has five of the six. (The editor of the *Journal*, by the way, has all six and plans to contribute a copy of the one which the Association library will not have) What else? Well, let's see, quartets by such composers as Arensky, Bloch, Adolf Busch, Cherubini, D'Indy, Faure, Fibich, Gliere, Gretchaninov, Juon, Kletzki, Moeran, Rheinberger, Franz Schmidt, Suk, Taneiev, Tcherepnine, Zemlinski, Zolotarev. Piano trios by such luminaries as Andrae, Bridge, Fesca, Gade, Goldmark, Gretchaninov, Hummel, Lalo, Rachmaninov, Saint Saens, Sinding, Suk, Villa Lobos. Keep in mind this but a tiny fraction randomly selected.

As we hope you now see, the acquisition of a library of this sort represents a very exciting opportunity for all of us.

THE SOUNDING BOARD---LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Could not the Cobbett Association develop a library from which copies could be obtained? I should think that it would be possible to find a printing establishment that would undertake all of the copying operations for a nominal price per page. There should be no copyright problems since the rights to most of these works would have expired.

Charles R. Garbett
Los Altos Hills, CA

Ed. Absolutely. Where there is no problem with copyright, we will provide members with copies. Where there is, we are considering loaning works to members as regular lending libraries do.

Details remain to be worked out and will no doubt evolve.

It is with great sadness that I learnt of the passing of Robert Maas through your *Journal*. I'm sure his name will live on through the Cobbett Association and I'm very pleased to learn that plans are being made to secure its future. I would be very pleased to receive a copy of Mr. David Canfield's *String Quartet in a minor* (in memoriam Robert Maas).

Andrew D. Marshall
Waltham, England

Ed. Bob Maas was an extraordinary person whom we shall all miss. The Association's continued existence

certainly will keep his name alive. Several members have responded to David Canfield's generous quartet offer, and your requests have been passed along to him. However, as of this writing, the parts await printing. We shall make an announcement when they are available.

Dear Members, this is your column, your place to ask questions, to have discussions, to make suggestions, to complain or even send compliments. Let us hear from you. Letters to the Editor should be addressed to us at 601 Timber Trail, Riverwoods, IL 60015.

Letters published may be edited for reasons of space, clarity and grammar.

LUIGI CHERUBINI'S SIX STRING QUARTETS

by Dr. David E. Canfield

Luigi Cherubini, 1760-1842, was at one time proclaimed by Beethoven to be the world's greatest living composer. Indeed, he was held in very high esteem throughout most of his lifetime in such disparate places as Paris, Vienna and London. (The London Philharmonic Symphony Society commissioned a symphony from him at one point.) In 1816 he obtained a professorship at the Paris Conservatoire and became its director in 1821. Cherubini achieved his greatest success in the theater and in the church, having composed more than 30 operas and a prodigious amount of sacred music. Of these scores, his opera *Medea* is best remembered today and receives occasional performances and recordings.

Unfortunately and unjustly, most of Cherubini's music has fallen into neglect today, although his Symphony was performed and recorded by Toscanini and others. Among the works least deserving of neglect are the six string quartets, surely his most important chamber works. (In addition to them he wrote a string quintet, a *Souvenir* for quartet, and a *March* for winds and bass.) Basil Deane, writing in *The New Grove Dictionary* asserts that "although carefully crafted and sometimes colourful, the works lack the sense of personal commitment which the medium demands. The outer movements are soundly constructed, contrapunctually ingenious and are clear and varied in texture. But there is an inescapable impression of cold calculation at the very heart of the music." The present writer must take issue with several statements in this opinion. These works are both warm and personal.

The quartets were almost surely written for Cherubini's own pleasure as "breathers" between his larger works, as there is no evidence that any of them was commissioned. The earliest of them dates from 1814 when he was 54 years old and the others were written when he was well advanced in years between 1829-1837. Although Cherubini was an Italian who spent most of his mature life in Paris, one cannot doubt that he knew well

the works by the German masters, in particular Beethoven, by the time he wrote the first of his quartets. Indeed, Cherubini travelled to Vienna in 1805 and spent some time there. During the course of his stay in Vienna, he met Beethoven and even attended the premiere of *Fidelio*. He also had one of his own operas, *Faniska*, premiered there to enormous success. [By contrast, the premiere of *Fidelio* was an astounding flop-Ed] It seems almost certain that Cherubini heard or obtained the scores to some of Beethoven's quartets, since there are pronounced influences of Beethoven throughout the six quartets.

In the *String Quartet No.1 in E flat*, for instance, we can hear many obvious influences: motivic interplay among the instruments, where a motive is tossed back and forth in Beethovenesque fashion. There is also much use of the thirds in contrary motion that Beethoven was so fond of, and even an occasion or two where the first violin soars to stratospheric heights while the other three instruments stay in a distinctly earth-bound range. Melodic and harmonic contours are also reminiscent of Beethoven in their juxtaposition of energy and pathos. All of this is not to suggest that Cherubini in his first quartet is a Beethoven clone. He does exude his own personality, and indeed the scherzo and finale of that quartet remind one almost more of Schubert than of Beethoven. But it is extremely doubtful that Cherubini would have heard any of Schubert's music at the time he composed this quartet in 1814.

The second quartet will sound familiar to anyone who knows Cherubini's *Symphony in D Major*, for it is an arrangement and transposition (into C Major) of that work originally commissioned by the London Philharmonic Society.

Quartet No.3 in d minor has programmatic elements which are contrasted and juxtaposed in non-functional ways reminiscent of late Beethoven. The influence of

Mendelssohn seems to be particularly strong in *Quartet No.4 in E* with its powerful modulations and modern form and harmony. Cherubini may well have heard the chamber music of Mendelssohn, as the latter had made a trip to Paris in the early 1830s.

Quartet No.5 in F, while somewhat simpler in form, still delves deeply into inner detail, achieving remarkable weave and overlay of its thematic motives. *Quartet No.6 in a minor* occupied Cherubini for the longest period of time in its composition, a full two years, and makes an instant impression with its unorthodox harmonies from the very beginning of the work. Its finale is noteworthy for its inclusion of the openings of the three previous movements.

All of Cherubini's six quartets make an immediate impression on the listener as they are works of a composer very much operatically (and thus melodically) inclined. They are also rewarding and challenging works to perform for each of the four instruments. I hope that these brief comments will inspire Cobbett Society members to seek out the music for these wonderful works and give them the exposure that they are surely due. To my knowledge, there is only one recording of the works, a very good reading by the Melos Quartet Stuttgart on DG Archiv 271008 (LP only)

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[Editor's notes: Dr. Canfield is in better company than Mr. Deane, if you consider that Schumann held Cherubini's quartets in high regard, as did W.W. Cobbett and Georges de St. Foix.

The quartets are not all currently in print. No.1, published by International, is easily obtained. Nos 2 & 4 are published by Hinrichshofen for which Peters is an agent. They generally must be ordered from Europe. No.6 was recently reprinted by Amadeus. Peters has a collection of Nos.1-3 which is supposedly in print but generally unavailable. No.5 has had no modern reprint.

THE STRING QUARTETS OF WILHELM STENHAMMAR

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public, his string quartets have been sadly neglected elsewhere.

Stenhammar (1871-1927) was trained as a pianist, became a virtuoso and was considered the finest Swedish pianist of his time. Pianists who venture into the realm of the string quartet often wind up writing compositions which sound like they were composed at, and are perhaps better played at, the piano. This is certainly a valid criticism of some of the quartet writing of both Schumann and Mendelssohn. 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. 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.

Stenhammar was not what the Germans call a "*Vielschreiber*", writing only some 45 works. Of the various genre in which he composed, none occupied him more than that of the string quartet and, they are, to be sure, among his finest works.

Quartet No.1 in C Major, Op.2, composed in 1895, is the most derivative of the six. It was only his second work, the first being his *Piano Concerto No.1*, which may explain why the transition from symphonic to chamber style escaped Stenhammar in the opening movement which sports an energetic and heroic early Wagnerian-type of theme. The second movement shows no such lapse. The fourth movement is noteworthy for its use of Spanish themes. Though perhaps sounding a little cliched to the modern ear, the writing is very effective with a rousing conclusion.

His Second Quartet, *Op.14 in c minor*, written in 1896, shows a firmer grasp of quartet style and is altogether more original although the influence of Beethoven is there. The opening to the

Scherzo second movement quotes the *Allegro vivace* of Beethoven's Op.95, but Stenhammar's ingenious development of the theme is masterful.

By his third quartet, *Op.18 in F Major*, Stenhammar's own voice had fully emerged. The work features a lovely, tranquil opening movement, continues on with a breathtaking *Presto agitato* linked to a powerfully brilliant and beautiful fugue. Completed in 1898, it is an entirely satisfying work to play. The ideas and tonality are beyond late Dvorak and Brahms and comparable to the music Dohnanyi was writing about this time. While what critics he's had generally consider Stenhammar's last three quartets his finest, this really seems to me to be a question of taste. Certainly the Second Quartet is deserving of regular performance and his Third is a masterpiece that belongs in the standard repertoire.

Several years passed before Stenhammar completed his *Quartet No.4 in A Major, Op.25* in 1909. Dedicated to Sibelius, it is unquestionably a very fine work by any standard. Poetic, ingeniously chromatic with an extraordinary idyllic and ethereal finale. The Fifth Quartet, *Op.29 in C Major* is nicknamed "Serenade". The powerful second movement marked "Ballata" is a *tour de force* which opens with a memorable viola solo. The theme is from an old Swedish folksong. What follows is a whirlwind scherzo and a barn-burning allegro. It is the most frequently performed of Stenhammar's quartets.

His final quartet, *No.6 in d minor, Op.35* was composed in 1916. There is a bleakness found here not seen in the other works. The death of his friend, the violinist Tor Aulin, and the Great War which wracked Europe had deeply depressed him. The most striking movement is the intensely stark finale with its haunting long unison passages and its

quote of the scherzo from Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

All six of these quartets will give pleasure to amateurs, professionals and listeners alike. Quartet Nos.2-6 belong in the repertoire and should be considered by professional touring groups. They are universal in scope and not merely Nordic as Grieg's are.

The quartets were released as a box set of LPs in the early 1980s, Caprice CAP 1201-03 with the Copenhagen, Fresk and Gotland Quartets each performing two. This set was also to be released on CD. Other recordings on LP have been made. Dr. Canfield is an expert in area of LPs and requests for LPs can be sent to him c/o Ars Antiqua / 6060 McNeely St. / Ellettsville IN 47429.

Parts are difficult to come by: Nos.1 and 4 were reprinted by Nordiska of Stockholm in 1970, No.2 by Edition Suecia in 1969, No.3 is out of print, No.5 was reprinted by Carl Gehrman's of Stockholm and No.6 is out of print. We expect to have all six quartets in our library. In the meantime, parts may be purchased from STIM. Write us for details.

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DISKOLOGY

Lack of space, forces us to present a highly truncated version of what will be a regular feature devoted to new and recent recordings of non-standard chamber works.

The String Quartets of Mikulas Zmeskal (1759-1833). "Zmeskal?" you ask. He's not *entirely* unknown, but a cellist-friend of Beethoven who dedicated the *Serioso* (Qt.9, Op.95) to him. The two quartets (G Major and g minor) performed by the Travnicek Qt. which appear on this 1988 Czech Opus CD 9151-1437 sans opus are both very charming in a Haydneque way but one would never guess this erstwhile cellist of the Schuppanzigh Qt. had ever heard much less played the great Ludwig's. Where are the parts to be found?