



THE  
**CHAMBER MUSIC**  
**JOURNAL**

*The Essential Guide  
For Players & Listeners  
To The Wider World  
of Chamber Music*


***Giovanni Sgambati's  
Piano Quintets  
The String Quartets  
Of Alexander Taneyev  
Ferdinand Thieriot Octet for  
Winds and Strings***

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# The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor



## Position of Players in a String Quartet

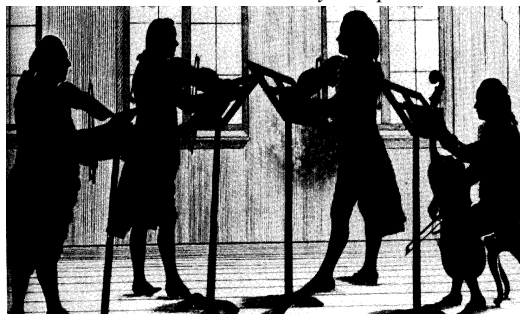
What is the correct seating arrangement for a string quartet?

Deepak Arya  
 Johannesburg, South Africa

*This is a very interesting question and one which has no definitive answer. The typical 18th century arrangement was from the audience's left: 1st violin, 2nd violin, viola and cello. (see below) The reason for this was probably pitch of the instruments. It was also the traditional placement of choral groups (sopranos, altos, tenors, basses). This seating sometimes is supported by the argument the 2nd violin and viola are the inner voices and were considered as such by composers.*



The Griller String Quartet takes the Joachim seating



*Alternative seatings started appearing in the 19th century. Joachim liked to have his cellist next to him and the 2nd violinist across from him. This is called antiphonal seating. He liked the separation of the high voices. The problem with this arrangement is that the f holes and sound of the 2nd violin are pointed away from the audience and toward the back of the stage.*



Earlier the Budapest Quartet sat with the Cello Outside



The Alban Berg usually sat this way but not always



The Joachim String Quartet

*This same problem occurs when the viola is placed opposite the 1st violin,*



The Vienna Philharmonic Quartet has sat this way for more than 75 years

*In the end, one might say it is like religion, a matter of personal belief.*



The Flonzaley String Quartet

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# Giovanni Sgambati's Piano Quintets

R.H.R. Silvertrust

Each time I begin an article like this, I am reminded of my own concert-going experience and am forced to wonder if I am just "spinning my wheels." Over four decades of concert attendance, the only piano quintets I have ever heard performed are the Schumann, the Dvorak and the Brahms—each several times, and the Schumann more than the Brahms and Dvorak put together.

Hence it was that once, when sitting on the board of directors of a concert series, I objected when we were offered a piano quintet by Schumann. When we asked the performers for something else, we were told it was Schumann or nothing. As I also wrote the program notes for this series, I decided to strike a blow for variety and quoted George Bernard Shaw, who served for many years as a music critic in London. He had attended a concert where the inevitable Schumann was performed and remonstrated, noting that there were other piano quintets that could have been programmed. I followed his lead and wrote what a pity it was that we could not hear a piano quintet by Shostakovich, or Bridge, or Dohnanyi—I confined myself to the better known composers and

did not make reference to the fine piano quintets of Anton Arensky, Eduard Franck, Carl Goldmark, Friedrich Kiel, Bohuslav Martinu, Giuseppe Martucci, Nikolai Medtner, Vitzeslav Novak, Joachim Raff, Josef Suk, or Giovanni Sgambati to name but a few. Just before the performance began, the pianist (he's well-known) stormed out onto the stage and literally shouted at the audience (I was sitting in the front row 10 feet from him), "I don't know who wrote your program notes, but he is an idiot. Robert Schumann had more talent in his little toe than George Bernard Shaw had in his whole body!" Even if this were true, did Schumann have more talent in his little toe than Shostakovich or Bridge or Dohnanyi had in their whole bodies? It is this kind of attitude which has doomed so many fine works to oblivion. Despite this, I write in hopes that the readership, who consists almost entirely of amateur and professional musicians, will take up the struggle and help some of these works to see the light of day.

Giovanni Sgambati (1841-1914), along with his compatriots, Antonio Bazzini, and Giuseppe Martucci, spearheaded the mid-late

*(Continued on page 4)*

## The String Quartets of Alexander Taneyev

By Moise Shevitovsky



The name Taneyev (spelled, at least in English, many different ways—Taneiev, Tanaiev, Taneieff, Taneyeff, Taneev 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 complexity and 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 the first son of a member of the Russian upper nobility, 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.

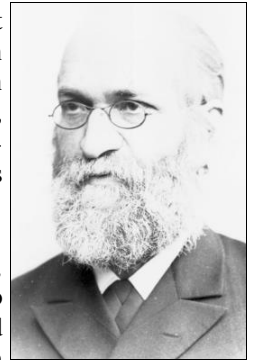
Judging from his output—two operas, three symphonies, several pieces for orchestra, several choral works, and a considerable amount of chamber music—

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Ferdinand Thieriot An Octet for Winds & Strings

by Klaus Piemholz

Ferdinand Thieriot (1838-1919) was born and died in Hamburg. In between, he traveled, lived and worked elsewhere for most of his life.



Up until recently, Thieriot's name, not to mention his music, had all but disappeared from the radar screen, or perhaps more accurately, the concert hall and recording studios. If it was to be found at all, it was as a footnote in some dusty reference work on Johannes Brahms. But Thieriot, though certainly no Brahms (who else is?), deserves to be more than a footnote.

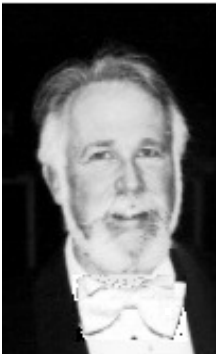
Thieriot's father, an enthusiastic amateur, gave his son piano and cello lessons. But Ferdinand hated lessons, and practicing even more. He told his father, he preferred to become a mer-

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## At The Doublebar



Mr Arya's question (see letters to the editor) led me on an interesting search for an answer. I don't recall that we have ever dealt with the question of seating arrangements for string quartets, but it is not only an interesting topic but also one on which many

players probably have strong opinions. As a cellist, when playing in a string quartet, I do not like sitting on the inside unless there is adequate space, which sometimes there is not. Today, many quartets choose to sit from the audience's left to right with the 1st violin, the 2nd, the cello and the viola. I have heard arguments in favor of this arrangement but am not convinced. I think it makes even less sense than putting the second violin across from the first because of the tonal character of the viola. With its f-holes pointing away from the audience, it has a very hard time being heard, unless the violist makes a special effort to twist toward the audience, something I have seen done often enough in performance but which looks a bit strange. At least in the case of the second violin, its higher pitch and part placement gives it a better chance of being heard as the ear naturally focuses on the highest pitches. Interestingly, overtime, seating arrangements in the same quartet sometimes changed, often at the same time there was change in personnel. Examples of this are the Budapest and the Alban Berg Quartets. Alberto Bachmann's *Encyclopedia of the Violin* has some wonderful historical pictures of famous bygone quartets. There, we find pictures of the Hellmesberger, the Letz, the Petri and the Kneisel Quartets all seated like the Joachim, with the cello next to the first violin and the 2nd across. Perhaps Joachim adopted the seating of the Hellmesberger Quartet, since it not only came before his quartet and but was also the most famous of its time. The London, Lenox, Flonzaley, Waldemar-Meyer, and New York Quartets are shown with the cello on the inside right and viola outside across for the 1st violin.

Our thanks to Messrs Piemholz and Shevitovsky for the fine articles about Thieriot's Octet and Alexander Taneyev's String Quartets. All very worthwhile works. —  
Ray Silvertrust, Editor

# Sgambati's Piano Quintets

(Continued from page 3)

19th century movement to reintroduce pure instrumental music to the Italian concert-going public. By 1850, the disdain or lack of interest in pure instrumental music throughout Italy was very similar to, and probably worse than the situation that existed in France and Paris in particular, where only opera interested the public. The same attitude prevailed in Milan, Venice, Rome and Naples, as well as the lesser Italian cities.

Sgambati was born to an Italian father and an English mother. His father died when he was quite young and his mother was almost entirely responsible for arranging his education which took place in the Umbrian town of Trevi. There he wrote church music and obtained experience as a singer and conductor. In 1860, he moved to Rome where he started to make a name for himself as a conductor and concert pianist. Franz Liszt came to Rome to live the following year. Sgambati met Liszt, who was impressed by his talents, and encouraged the Italian to devote himself to instrumental music. Liszt was the most famous musician then residing in Rome and his influence, not only on Sgambati but also on several other Italian composers, cannot be underestimated. In return for Liszt's help, Sgambati took up the work of popularizing German instrumental music, with especial emphasis on that of Liszt.



It was during this period, 1864–1865 that Sgambati composed a string quartet, two piano quintets, an octet, and an overture. When Liszt traveled to Munich in 1866, he took Sgambati with him and introduced him to Wagner and his music. Later, when Wagner came to visit Liszt in Rome, Liszt insisted that Wagner attend concert performances of Sgambati's piano quintets after which, Wagner wrote to his publisher Schott as follows:

*"I wish to strongly recommend to you for publication two piano quintets by Signor Sgambati of Rome. It was Liszt who drew my attention to this composer, who is also an exceptionally talented pianist. I have now had the very real pleasure of discovering a truly great and original talent,*

*which as it is somewhat out of place in Rome, I would gladly introduce to the greater musical world."*

Despite his friendship with Liszt and Wagner, their influence is not to be found in **Piano Quintet No.1 in f minor, Op.4**, which was composed in 1866. It is a very original work which, unlike the works of Martucci, tonally bears little resemblance to any of the major German composers. The opening movement *Adagio-allegro ma non troppo*, begins with a lengthy and somber introduction, the purpose of which is to build tension.



The Allegro explodes forth with a highly dramatic theme which is super-charged with energy. It begins in the strings.



(Continued on page 5)

The first system shows a piano introduction with a cello line. The second system continues the piano part with 'Ped.' markings. The third system features a section marked 'B' with 'poco rit.' and 'appassionato ma sostenuto.' instructions, including 'arco.' and 'pizz.' markings.

But as soon as they reach the first climax, the piano takes over and jumps forth, exploding in a highly impressive roller coaster series of scale passages, bursting with energy. (See the example on the left.) The excitement is palpable.

The interplay goes on for quite some time until things gradually settle down. The music becomes quieter and Sgambati finally introduces the lovely second theme.

This is a very lyrical melody providing a superb contrast with what has come before.

It is first entrusted to the cello before the others join in. (See the example on the right.) This is a stunning and impressive movement in every respect and one can immediately hear why Liszt and Wagner were impressed—they were listening to a new and original voice.

The cello part begins with a melodic line marked 'dol.' and 'arco.', followed by a section marked 'pizz.'.

The second movement, *Vivacissimo*, is a very modern Italian-sounding scherzo. Brilliant and full of pulsing energy, the music races along breathlessly until it reaches the dreamy, slow middle section. This movement is a real tour de force. (continued on page 6)

The score for the 'Vivacissimo' movement starts with a tempo marking of quarter note = 84. It features multiple systems of music with 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'cresc.' (crescendo) markings, showing a dynamic range from very soft to very loud.

(Continued from page 5)

Next comes a soft *Andante sostenuto*. Its main theme has a religious feeling and the music sounds suitable for a church service. The extraordinary and gigantic finale, *Allegro moderato*, has enough musical material for an entire work, let alone a single movement. It is in the form of a theme and set of variations.

Allegro moderato. (♩ = 132.)

rit. a tempo. (♩ = 120.)

Allegro moderato. (♩ = 152.)

dim. e rit. p (♩ = 120.)

Ped. Ped. Ped.

It opens with two chords which vaguely recall the scherzo of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. (Example on left)

However, the main theme, is for intents and purposes, unrelated to the opening, which is clearly designed to focus the listener's attention after the meditative *Andante*. The main theme is a genial march that has a lop-sided rhythm. It's development is very unusual and some of the chords are tonally quite advanced for 1866.

The first variation is a kind of scherzo in modified canonic form. I say modified

because rather than each voice reintroducing the melody with its entrance, instead it is as if one voice starts a phrase and the next finishes it and then the following phrase is presented in similar fashion but perhaps with different voices being used.

The most striking of the variations is the second, which begins *Un poco piu moderato*. However, this variation actually consists of 7 sizeable variations! Each is wonderfully contrasting. Hence the *Un poco piu moderato*, an example of which appears on the right, is only the first of these seven.

In it, the theme is highly modified, stretched out and is played by the first violin over tremolos, while the original rhythm from the first theme is softly played in the background.

Not only does this create a strong contrast to the preceding variation but it also serves as one of the dramatic high points, stopping just short of becoming melodramatic. Like a fire, it slowly burns itself out.

In the next section we find a complete change of mood with a highly lyrical and lovely third theme which the strings present as a unified group, creating an almost orchestral effect.

VAR. II.

Un poco piu moderato. (♩ = 108.)

poco rit. p ma marcato.

poco rit. trem. veloce. pp ma marcato.

poco rit. trem. veloce. pp

VAR. II.

Un poco piu moderato. (♩ = 108.)

poco rit. un poco marcato.

f con fuoco. sf

f con fuoco. sf

f con fuoco. sf simili.

mpre f> simili.

The fourth section, *Piu mosso*, is another dramatic high point.

It is a kind of march of doom. The piano pounds out the theme while the strings accompany it with drum-like figures as shown in the example on the left.

As if this were not enough, besides the three remaining "internal" variations within the second variation, there are two more actually numbered variations, the last of which, the fourth, like the second, is quite substantial and has within it a number of sub-variations. In addition, there is a panoramic trip to an exciting climax. In my opinion, this is a first rate work that ought to stand in the front rank of piano quintets. That it neither sounds Brahmsian nor Wagnerian makes an even stronger case for its inclusion into the concert repertoire. Any performing group which takes this work into the concert hall will certainly be rewarded.

Often times a composer will complete a work, for example, a piano trio or string quartet, and rather than writing something in a different genre, immediately will set about writing another work for exactly the same combination as the work just completed. This is usually the result of a composer bursting with ideas which are perfect for that kind of ensemble and which he or she does not want to lose

This must have been the case with Sgambati. For after listening or playing the last movement of his First Piano Quintet, one can well understand why he immediately sat down and decided to write a second one. He was overflowing with ideas. Arguably, he could have done with fewer than he did in the last movement of No.1. Hence we have **Piano Quintet No.2 in B flat Major, Op.5**, composed immediately after he finished No.1.

Andante.  $\text{♩} = 84$

The image shows the beginning of the Andante movement. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a melodic line with some grace notes. The second staff provides accompaniment, also starting with *p* and moving to mezzo-forte (*mf*) later on.

The massive opening movement *Andante*, with its soft viola aria against a tonally advanced accompaniment was more than a decade ahead of its time. (example on left) As the cello joins in, a very beautiful moment is created. At the violin's entrance, the lower voices begin a somewhat uni-

maginative accompaniment.

However, the rolling 16th notes slowing morph into a powerful transition vehicle which allows for an increase not only in tempo but also in tension building to a powerful climax. (Example on the right).

Più mosso.  $\text{♩} = 119$

The image shows the beginning of the Più mosso movement. It features four staves of music. The first three staves (violin, viola, and cello) are marked with 'più cresc.' and show a transition from a slower tempo to a faster one. The fourth staff (piano) is marked with 'più cresc.' and shows a similar transition. The tempo is marked as 'Più mosso' with a quarter note equal to 119 beats per minute.

The movement is written on a huge scale quite possibly because of the wealth of ideas Sgambati was trying to squeeze into it.

Allegretto con moto.  $\text{♩} = 76$

The image shows the beginning of the Allegretto con moto movement. It consists of four staves of music. The first three staves (violin, viola, and cello) are marked with 'sotto voce' and show a rocking 6/8 rhythm. The fourth staff (piano) is also marked with 'sotto voce' and shows a similar rhythm. The tempo is marked as 'Allegretto con moto' with a quarter note equal to 76 beats per minute.

Next comes a *Barcarolle*, *Allegretto con moto*, with its rocking 6/8 rhythm and flowing melody, it conjures up the canals of Venice. Again, there are unusual tonal episodes which smack of a more modern era. Even the very

opening of the movement, played unisono sotto voce, creates an unusual and vaguely haunting effect. It is the piano, entering after this statement, which is given a series of tonally advanced scale passages. A more lyrical episode follows. Here, Sgambati has succeeded quite nicely in creating something very Italian, in true chamber music style, and forward looking to boot.

(Continued from page 7)

In the following slow movement, *Andante*, the piano is given a lengthy, solemn introduction which recalls Schubert.

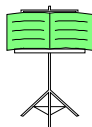
The strings then enter and embark upon a leisurely exposition of the spacious main theme, which is both quite emotive and effective. Its great spaciousness and the length of its phrases (though not the melody) again recalls Schubert's similar treatment in the slow movement to his Cello Quintet, D.956. The example on the left gives only five measures, but slowness of the tempo requested creates amazing breadth. And, like the Schubert Quintet, there is a wonderful heavenly quality to the music, which unfortunately is ruined by a rather bizarre development.

The finale, *Allegro vivace*, is a buoyant, triumphant jaunt full of excitement and good spirits. In the development section, there are a few measures which sound as if they were extracted from

Wagner's overture to *Die Walküre*. No doubt, Wagner noticed these. They don't fit in, but they are brief enough so as not to ruin what is otherwise a good movement, nor should it be considered derivative because of a quote-like phrase of 3 measures.

In sum, these are both good works. The general opinion has been that the First is the better of the two. In this, I concur. As I said, it is excellent work. By virtue of its originality, it deserves a place in the front rank and should be put in the repertoire if it is ever broadened, at the same time as such quintets as those of Kiel, Goldmark and a few others. The second quintet is good enough to be performed and perhaps some of you will prefer it.

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## New Recordings



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

### String Quartets

Hans APOSTEL (1901-72) 2 Quartets, Opp. 7 & 26, Cybele KiG 002 / Luigi BOCCHERINI (1743-1805) 5 Quartets Opp.8 No.6, 26 No.4, 32 No.5, 33 No.5 & 44 No.4, Ars Musici 232182 / Alexander BOËLY (1785-1858) No.1, Op.22, Laborie 05 / Carlos CHAVEZ (1899-1978) No.3, Quindecim 28 / Salvatore CONTRERAS (1910-82) No.4, Quindecim 28 / Candelario HUIZAR 91883-1970) Qt, Quindecim 28 / Nikolai MYASKOVSKY (1881-1950) Nos.1 & 13, Ar-re 2010 / Wayne PETERSON (1927-) Nos.1-3, Foghorn 1994 / Robert de ROOS (1907-76) Nos.2, 5 & 8, MD&G 603 1613 / Edmund RUBBRA (1903-85) Nos. 1-4, Dutton Epoch2010 / Erwin SCHULHOFF (1894-1942) Nos.1 & 2, Naxos 8.570965 / Anton TITZ (1742-1810) 3 Qts, Profil 0030

### Strings Only-Not Quartets

Alexander BOËLY (1785-1858) Trio Op.5 No.2 & Sextet in D, Laborie 05 / Ferdinand THIERIOT (1838-1919) Sextet in D, Toccata 0080

### Piano Trios

Enrico BOSSI (1861-1925) Nos.1 & 2, Tac-tus 862704 / Benjamin GODARD (1849-95) Nos.1 & 2, MD&G 305 1615 / Enrique GRANADOS (1867-1916) Op. 50, Naxos 8.572262 / Ludwig THUILLE (1861-1907) Trio for Vln, Vla & Pno, Champs Hill 001/002

### Piano Quartets, Quintets & Sextets

Enrique GRANADOS (1867-1916) Quintet Op.49, Naxos 8.572262 / Josef NOWAKOWSKI (1800-65) Quintet Op.17, Camerata 28174 / Antoni STOLPE (1851-72) Sextet in E, Camerata 28174 / Ferdinand THIERIOT (1838-1919) Quintet

Op.20, Toccata 0080 / Ludwig THUILLE (1861-1907) Quintet Nos. 1 & 2, Champs Hill 001/002

### Winds & Strings

None this issue

### Winds, Strings & Piano

Johann Nepomuk HUMMEL (1778-1837) Septet for Fl, Ob, Hn, Vla, Vc, Kb & Pno, Op.74, Divox 70503 / Heinrich Kaspar SCHMID (1874-1953) Trio for Cln, Vla & Pno, Op.114, CPO 777 391

### Piano & Winds

Theodor BLUMER (1882-1964) 2 Sextets for Piano & Winds Opp.45 & 92, Antes 31-9215 / Amilcare PONCHIELLI (1834-86) Qnt for Fl, Ob, 2 Cln & Pno, MD&G 304 1618 / Ludwig THUILLE (1861-1907) Sextet for Piano & Winds, Op.6, Champs Hill 001/002

### Winds Only

None this issue



# The String Quartets of Alexander Taneyev *continued from page 3*

his appointment schedule could not have been too heavy. Taneyev wrote 3 String Quartets. It is thought that they were composed between 1898-1900. Judging from program bills I have seen, these quartets were performed in Russia up until the First World War and then only very rarely thereafter. Outside of Russia, he has largely escaped notice (e.g. one sentence in *Cobbett's Cyclopedia* and nothing *Altmann's Handbook* although he does receive a somewhat complimentary paragraph in the *New Grove*.)

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.

Maestoso. (♩ = 76) *d=50* A. S. Tanéïev, Op.25.

*f* *mf* *p* *un poco più mosso* *Allegro* (♩ = 160) *mf* *p*

This very well put together movement is followed up by a short, but superb scherzo marked *Presto*.

*Presto* (♩ = 76)

*p* *f*

There is no trio but the energetic main theme is punctuated by two episodes of a slower more relaxed melody.

*tranquillo*

*p*

Next is a very lyrical *Andante sostenuto* with some interesting chromaticism.

*Andante sostenuto* (♩ = 66) *cantando*

*p*

Here, the cello is entrusted with introducing the lovely main theme.

The vigorous finale, *Allegro risoluto*, is clearly based on a Russian folk melody.

*Allegro risoluto* (♩ = 144)

*mf* *f*

For those of you who are familiar with the appealing string quartets of Alexander Kopylov, one might say that this work is in many ways similar to Kopylov's First String Quartet, Op.15. Like that work, I think this quartet would not only be appreciated by concert audiences for its lovely melodies but also by amateur players for its fine part-writing with no outstanding technical difficulties. Taneyev clearly could write for strings. Although Cobbett's one sentence unfairly tars him with the epithet of "amateur", he is no more an amateur than Borodin. And Borodin often required help from Rimsky-Korsakov to complete what he was working on. There is no evidence that Taneyev ever did.

**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.

*Moderato assai* (♩ = 80) A. S. Tanéïev, Op.28.

*p* *cresc.* *f*

The second movement, *Intermezzo*, subtitled *Valse melancolique* is immediately gripping. The actual waltz does not appear until the trio section. Instead, the movement opens with a pleading somewhat hypnotic theme introduced by the violin. (see below). What makes it work is the rhythm of the accompaniment in the other three voices as shown in the first measure of the example.

*Allegro non troppo* (♩ = 126)

*p* *cresc.* *mf* *dim.* *p*

As can be seen, the theme is not particularly melodic, however, this changes with the development in which the cello completes the first part of the long-lined phrase, the viola the next part, and the first violin the last, while the theme climbs in pitch over two octaves. As mentioned, the actual waltz does not appear until the trio. And this waltz is not *melancolique* but rather upbeat. It is true that the main section of the intermezzo certainly is melancholy and is also in 3/4 waltz time, but it really is not a waltz you would dance to. The trio is, and is quite well done. It provides excellent contrast with what has come before.

*Solo.* *a tempo*

*ppp* *rit. p rubato* *<rit. mp*

*cresc.* *f* *un poco accel.*

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

In addition to the lively theme, there is the clever use of harmonics, which recalls the First Quartet of Borodin.

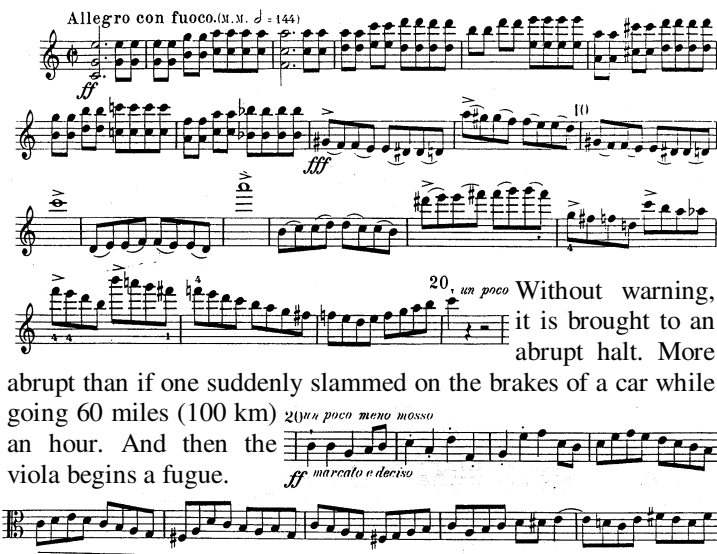
Next is a slight *Minuet con moto*, an updated, chromatic and Russified version of the Viennese classic.



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 wild and extraordinarily tumultuous introduction.



Without warning, it is brought to an abrupt halt. More abrupt than if one suddenly slammed on the brakes of a car while going 60 miles (100 km) an hour. And then the viola begins a fugue.

One finds this kind of thing in late Beethoven. And here and there, there are other touches which similarly recall that master.

All and all this an interesting work. One can no longer immediately identify Taneyev as a Rimsky-Korsakov student or protégé and in general there is little or nothing to which one can point and say, "that is Russian."

This was the quartet which was most often performed in concert during that period when Taneyev's quartets could be heard on the concert stages of Petersburg and Moscow. I think audiences would appreciate hearing it now and would suggest it for performance. Again, except for some tricky rhythms, there is nothing technically which should deter amateurs, to whom I heartily recommend this quartet

**String Quartet No.3 in A Major, Op.30** resembles his first quartet, not only structurally—it is in the traditional four movements—but also because the melodic material again shows the influence of Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov. Hence, one also finds similarities with the quartets of Kopylov, Sokolov,

Borodin and the rest of the so-called Beliaev circle. The opening *Allegro comodo* features of gentle but lovely opening theme.



The music, though lovely, does not generate the kind of excitement or drama one expects to find in an opening movement. It would have been more suitable for a second or third movement. Playing it faster than 144 does not help as the music does not lend itself to this treatment. There are also some moments, though not many, where one feels the composer has lost focus and the music seems to wander aimlessly. To its credit, however, there is quite a powerful conclusion, which comes as a bit of a surprise.

Next is a short *Scherzo, Allegro molto*. It is a rapid elves dance that is a moto perpetuo.



The somewhat slower trio section is dark and brooding, providing a fine contrast.



This is just sort of thing at which the Beliaevs excelled. The same is true about the reflective *Larghetto* which comes next.



The rhythmically vigorous finale, *Allegro molto*, is perhaps the strongest and best movement of this work.



While the Third Quartet is certainly worthwhile, the last 3 movements in particular being quite good, I feel the first two quartets more deserving of revival. Parts to all are available.

## An Octet for Winds and Strings by Ferdinand Thieriot *(continued from page 3)*

chant. His father obliged and placed him with a firm. No sooner was the boy copying letters and writing bills than he realized that the daily routine of practicing the cello and the piano was not so bad after all. Changing course, he was sent to study with Eduard Marxsen in Altona, a suburb of Hamburg. Marxsen had been Brahms' teacher as well. It was during his Hamburg days that he met and befriended Brahms, five years his senior. However, he did not study with Brahms as is sometimes claimed. (q.v. *Cobbett's Cyclopedia*) After this, Thieriot studied briefly with Carl Reissiger in Dresden before traveling to Munich where he studied for two years with Joseph Rheinberger. After completing his studies, he held directorships in the minor towns of Ansbach and Glogau. Hankering after something better, he applied for a similar position in Styrian capital Graz, the second largest German city in Austria. He wrote to his friend Brahms, now in Vienna and famous, for help. Brahms not only sent a letter recommending Thieriot, but spoke against his main competitor for the position, Herzogenberg, a Graz native. Thieriot got the job and worked in Graz between 1870-85, not only as Music Director but also as head of the main music school. His duties took away from his time as a composer and finally he relinquished his positions and left for Weimar and then Leipzig, where he held less demanding posts allowing him to concentrate on composing. In 1902, he returned to Hamburg where he remained until his death.

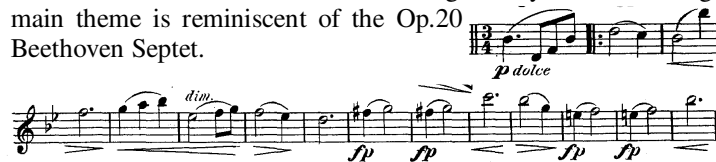
Thieriot composed in most every genre producing some 10 symphonies and a great volume of chamber works of every sort. During his lifetime, his music was championed by many well-known musicians, including Carl Reinecke and Brahms. It usually received consistent praise and was highly regarded. But after the First World War, in the reaction against Romanticism, his name and his music, like that of so many others, disappeared.

Thieriot's life spanned a huge period in the development of classical music. Born at a time when Schumann and Mendelssohn were at their height, his early music like virtually all of his German contemporaries, including Brahms, was built along these lines. Even later in life, some unknowledgeable critics called his works "Mendelssohniads". But Thieriot evolved unlike for example Max Bruch who was an exact contemporary. One can hear Mendelssohn in Bruch's very last works composed in 1919, whereas Thieriot's later works, in particular his symphonies, are informed by the developments made by Bruckner and Wagner.

Just when the **Op.62 Octet in B flat Major for two violins, viola, cello, bass, clarinet, horn and bassoon** was composed is subject to some dispute. We know that it was published in 1893 at which time Thieriot was residing in Leipzig. However, most sources list it as have been composed much earlier. The German version of Wikipedia attributes it to 1887, Werner Ehrbrecht, who wrote the notes for the Arte Nova recording, states it was after the composer had left Graz, while website of Edition Silvertrust indicates that it was composed around 1873, while he was still living in Graz.

What is not in doubt is that it is in the grand tradition of the Schubert Octet and of Beethoven's Op.20 Septet. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these two works served as the "god parents" for Thieriot's Octet, which shares much in common with both. It has, for example, the same instrumentation as the Schu-

bert. The opening movement, *Poco adagio--Allegro non troppo* with its short, show introduction leading to a lyrical and lilted main theme is reminiscent of the Op.20 Beethoven Septet.



The second movement, entitled *Intermezzo, un poco vivace*, begins in the spirit of a Schumann scherzo, but the trio section with its lovely writing for the horn and clarinet again brings back echoes of Op.20 (Example of Horn part from trio below)



Without question, the Octet's center of gravity is its middle movement, *Adagio molto mesto*. It begins with a long solo for the cello, followed then by another for the clarinet. The climax is reached after the gorgeous and moody solo for the horn. (example below)



Next comes a Schumannesque *Scherzo, Allegro vivace*. It is energetic, syncopated and full of forward motion.

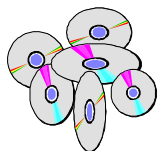


The finale, *Allegro moderato*, harks back to Schubert and is filled with lovely melodies and rich ideas. It is the clarinet which introduces the beautiful opening melody.

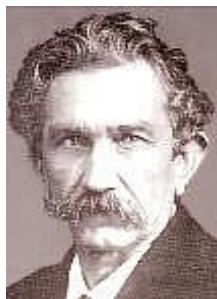


I think it important to note that the part writing is really very, very good, in no way inferior to either the Schubert or Beethoven. Each instrument is given the chance to take the lead and when used in support becomes part of a matchless blend. It is so well done, you are left feeling that this unusual combination is entirely natural.

Given the fact that we do not get to hear septets or octets for winds and strings very often, it is perhaps too much to ask that the Thieriot be chosen for a program. However, if it is, there will be no disappointments. And certainly any group which gets together to play the Schubert Octet ought to try the Thieriot as well.



## Diskology: A Piano Quartet & Piano Quintet by Hans Huber Max Reger's Clarinet Quintet and String Sextet



**Hans Huber** (1852-1921) was born in the Swiss town of Eppenberg. Between 1870-74, he studied at the Leipzig Conservatory with Carl Reinecke and Ernst Richter. After graduating, he held a number of positions before being appointed a professor at the Basel Conservatory, where he served as director between 1889-1917. Huber's music was firmly rooted in the Romantic movement, inspired at first by Schumann and Brahms and then later

by Liszt and Richard Strauss. He was widely considered Switzerland's leading composer during the last quarter of the 19th and first decade of the 20th century. He composed in virtually every genre and many of his works were for long years part of various repertoires and the only works by a Swiss composer that were regularly performed outside of Switzerland.

The first work on **Migros CD 6257** is Huber's **Piano Quartet No.2 in E Major, Op.117**. It dates from 1901. It became known as the *Waldlieder* (Forest Songs) Piano Quartet because lines from a poem by the important Swiss poet Gottfried Keller appeared on the title page of the first edition: "*The branches and the treetops of the oak forest are standing intertwined / Today it sang to me its old song in a happy voice.*" At the time of its premiere, a Swiss music critic wrote of the Piano Quartet that "*the music breathes the joy of the holidays and the wanderer's happiness, depicting with graphic clarity, as does Keller's poem, the forest in calm and in storm.*" The opening movement, *Andante con moto*, begins with an air of contemplation, tenderly creating a sound picture of nature's magical moments. However, as the music progresses, the we hear winds rushing through the trees creating a sense of drama. The second movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, characterized by an ever present restlessness and as well as downward plunging chromaticism, is a furious scherzo in which a storm bursts. The next movement, *Adagio molto*, begins where the scherzo has left off. One can hear the forest after the storm, the raindrops dripping from the branches, which are hanging low from the damaging winds. But in the finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, the sun has come out and is glistening upon the leaves. There is a joyous return of normality in a hymn of thanksgiving. This is a fine work which would do well in the concert hall but should also be of interest to amateurs. The parts are in print.

The second work on disk is the **Piano Quintet No.1 in g minor, Op.111**. It was composed in 1896. Huber begins the opening movement, *Andante con moto*, in a rather unconventional way. Rather than introducing the main theme, he opens with a lengthy fugue for the strings alone. Only after this, does the piano enter and introduce the muscular main theme. The contrasting second theme bears resemblance to a gavotte, albeit, an updated one. A big, thrusting and very powerful scherzo, *Allegro molto*, grabs the listener by the collar from its opening bars and does not let go. A calmer trio section provides contrast. A slow movement, *Adagio*, follows. It is a theme and set of variations. The theme is not your typical song-like melody but a canon. The finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, has a dramatic and exciting main theme and ends with a thrilling coda. A highly recommended CD.

It has often been said that the music of **Max Reger** (1873-1916) is an acquired taste. Maybe, but it is not as hard to acquire, I think, as a taste for atonal music. Reger rejected the path Schoenberg and the Second Vienna School took and tried hard to find a different way to modernize music. The debate has always been whether he succeeded.



Reger 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 he 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.

Reger's **String Sextet in F Major, Op.118**, the first work on **MDG CD# 304-1557**, was composed in 1910. It is an excellent example of his goal of modernizing musical language within a traditional tonal framework in order to arrive at a new means of expression. Some, as one critic who wrote after the Sextet's premiere, "*Here is a great and original work which leaves no wish unfulfilled,*", clearly felt he had succeeded. The opening theme to the first movement, *Allegro energico*, is robust and rough hewn. Here, Reger has the upper voices present the striking first part of the theme while opposed by the lower three voices with triplets. His sophisticated use of counterpoint results in original polyphonic episodes. The second movement, *Vivace*, is based on a gripping alternation of dramatic and quiet sections. The result is particularly effective. The main section is filled with forward drive while the middle section is slower and more lyrical. Of the third movement, *Largo con grand espressione*, Reger wrote that it was his conversation with God. It is certainly deeply felt. The finale, *Allegro commodo*, is, as the title suggests, full of commotion and powerful dramatic contrasts. There are parts, mostly in the first movement, of the Sextet which clearly are difficult but nothing, I think, beyond experienced amateur players who I think, if they keep an open mind will find this a rewarding work. The parts are in print.

The second work on disk, Reger's **Quintet for Clarinet and Strings in A Major, Op.146**, is one of his best known and liked chamber music works. Although the number of clarinet quintets is small, the number one gets to hear in concert is even smaller, generally only that of Mozart and of Brahms. But Max Reger's is equally as deserving to be heard. Reger's clarinet quintet is the last of his chamber compositions. It was completed just 10 days

## Two Piano Trios by Carl Gottlieb Reissiger And a String Quartet by Richard Stöhr

before his sudden death of a heart attack. Unlike either Mozart or Brahms, Reger quite unobtrusively embeds the clarinet into the contrapuntal complex of the strings, obviously trying to restrain the idiomatic style of playing to which the clarinet is inclined. He tried to match the tone of the strings very closely and took especial pains not to allow the quintet to degenerate into a concertino. The entry of the main theme in the first movement, *Moderato ed amabile*, makes this quite clear. It is shared between the clarinet and first violin, without either instrument taking the lead. Formally, Reger keeps to classical models. The opening movement follows sonata form but has three themes, the first receives considerable attention and is used again in the third movement. The four movements are very closely linked by thematic material. In the second movement, *Vivace*, the theme resembles that of the first theme of the previous movement. The slow movement, *Largo*, with its plaintive sighs and dense scoring is particularly impressive. For the finale, Reger, as did Mozart and Brahms before him, chooses a theme with variations. In this case, there are eight variations. For the most part, serenity is maintained throughout this autumnal work. A very worthwhile CD.

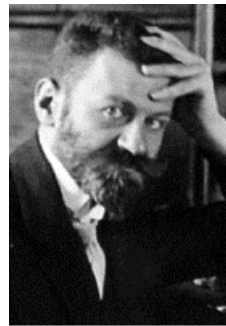


**Carl Gottlieb Reissiger** (1798-1859) was born in the Prussian town of Belzig. He originally attended the famous Thomasschule in Leipzig as his father intended him to be a priest, however, his extraordinary musical talent was recognized and he was encouraged to pursue a musical career. His initial 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. He became a leading conductor of German opera. Wagner worked under Reissiger for nearly a decade, and 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. His piano trios, during his lifetime, were extraordinarily popular, so much so that he composed no less than 25. And his fecundity, made many of his contemporaries jealous and critical. They often would unfairly call him names such as "the poor man's Schubert." However, the public adored his music for its appealing melodies, excitement, and drama. Amateur chamber music players never ceased to enjoy playing his works and professionals performed them in concert often to great success. It is a pity, the jeers of those who could not produce such ingratiating works, and who were especially peeved that Reissiger could produce one after another, almost effortlessly, led to his music falling into oblivion. But now, when one of his works is encountered, the invariable reaction is, how could this work have disappeared.

**Hungaroton CD# 32488** is the first, to my knowledge, to present any of his chamber music, two piano trios. The first, **Piano Trio**

**No.7 in E Major, Op.85**, dates from the 1830's. The opening movement, *Allegro brillante*, begins with a series of attention-getting chords. The first theme is a beautiful Schubertian melody brought forth by the strings. A Beethovenian development section follows. The simple, second theme, is clearly a folk dance tune. The cello presents the very vocal and charming first theme to the *Andante* which follows. When the violin enters, we are reminded of an operatic duet. A Beethovenian, pounding *Scherzo*, full of forward motion, comes next. The finale, a syncopated *Allegro molto*, is a toe-tapping rondo with Hungarian overtones.

The second work, **Piano Trio No.15 in G Major, Op.164**, was composed in the late 1830's and published in the early part of the next decade. The lovely main theme of the first movement, *Moderato*, evokes the ghost of Schubert with its fine melodic writing which effortlessly flows forth like water from a fountain. A hard-driving *Scherzo, presto*, which does not allow for a moment's breath, comes next. A beautiful, languid trio section provides a fine contrast. This piano trio has no real slow movement as the *Andante quasi allegretto*, is more of an upbeat march than anything else. The finale, *Allegro*, has a dramatic melody, pulsing with excitement for its main theme. Once again, the composer's great melodic gift is on display. A fine CD. Parts to both trios are in print and available.



**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.

On **ORF CD#3093** we find Stöhr's **String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.22**. It 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. 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*

## An Octet for Winds, Strings & Piano and a Piano Quintet by Paul Juon String Trios by Wilhelm Berger and Ernst Naumann

*vivace*, comes next. It is a merry, lopsided, syncopated dance. Again, we can hear certain gentle, modern, 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. I really enjoyed this quartet and think it is strong enough for concert performance. A highly recommended CD. The parts are in available.



**Paul Juon** (1872-1940) has appeared with some regularity on these pages. During his lifetime, he was regarded as a first rate composer and his works were frequently performed. He has been called the link between Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky as his music falls somewhere between the two. His early work shows a Russian influence with the use of folk melodies while his later efforts are more cosmopolitan, combining elements of modernism with traditional classical

forms. Born of Swiss émigré parents, he was educated at the Moscow Conservatory where he studied composition with Anton Arensky and Sergei Taneyev. In 1906, Juon was invited by Joseph Joachim, head of the prestigious Berlin Hochschule für Musik, to become a Professor of Composition, a post which he held until 1934.

The first work on **Migros CD#6243** is his **Octet for Violin, Viola, Cello, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn and Piano, Op.27**. It dates from 1905 and, like several of his other works, exists in an alternate version—a nonet which is called *Kammersinfonie*. In the Octet, Juon, for the most part left Russian influences out of the music. From the opening bars of the *Allegro non troppo*, we hear a composer who is truly pioneering a new path. This movement is a good example of why he has been called the link between Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky. The themes are traditionally tonal but there is a modern light, neo-classical, almost French sound. The second movement, *Andante elegiaco*, begins with a lovely, sad but not tragic, cello solo. The mood is reflective and muted in emotion. The marvelous third movement, *Allegro non troppo quasi moderato*, is full of restless energy, created by the running notes in the piano. The main theme is vaguely oriental. The finale, *Moderato*, begins with a stately introduction played by the piano alone. While the piano maintains the dignity of the music, the other parts are expertly woven around it producing marvelous episodes of rich and unusual tone coloring. The parts are in print.

The second work on disk is his **Piano Quintet No.1 in d minor, Op.33**. It dates from 1906, and like the Octet, exists in two versions. Besides the original version for violin, two violas, cello and piano, the composer also made a version for two violins, viola, cello and piano—a good thing when you consider the unlikelihood of it getting played much in the original combination. The main theme to the large scale opening movement, *Moderato quasi andante*, consists of an expansive melodic line played

calmly by the muted violin. Its ponderous, downwards gliding motion is contrasted with a dynamic, upwardly striving second theme. A vocal, cantabile *Molto adagio* follows. A faster middle section consists of a fugue for all five voices. The third movement, *Quasi valse*, takes the place of a scherzo and begins with the piano playing knocking note repetitions which sound somewhat wooden. The music gains momentum, color and sonority with the entrance of the strings. The main theme to the final movement, *Allegro non troppo*, is based on a Russian folk song, *Spin, my spinning girl*, found in Tchaikovsky's collection of Russian folksongs for piano duet. It is followed by a passionate second melody. A highly recommended CD.



**VKJK (Querstand) CD#1020** presents two heretofore unrecorded string trios. The first is by **Wilhelm Berger** (1861-1911) Although born in Boston (USA), his family moved back to Germany shortly after his birth. He studied composition with Friedrich Kiel in Berlin at the Hochschule für Musik. After graduating, he held a number of teaching positions Though his compositions had won many prizes and were often performed, Berger did not achieve the fame he deserved until just before his death,

when, along with Max Reger, he was finally regarded the most important successor to Brahms. The first movement to his **String Trio in g minor, Op.69, *Lebhaft***, begins with a lovely Idyll. The main theme is warm and charming. The second movement, *Etwas belebt*, is a set of variations on a march-like theme. The fugal variation in the minor is particularly fine. The magnificent scherzo, *Sehr lebhaft* which follows has the quality of a tarantella. The finale has a long, slow introduction, while the main section combines a charming naiveté with humorous. I have played and performed this work and consider it one of the finest from the late romantic era. (1898)

The second work presented is the **String Trio in D Major Op.12** from 1883 by **Ernst Naumann** (1832-1910 I have been unable to find any photograph) was born in the German town of Freiberg in Saxony. He studied at the Leipzig Conservatory with Moritz Hauptmann and Ernst Friedrich Richter and made his name primarily as a organist, editor and conductor. He served as Kapellmeister of Jena from 1860 until his death. His compositions were not numerous and a large part of them are chamber music. Besides his string trio, he composed two viola quintets, a string quartet, a nonet and a trio for piano, violin and viola. The first movement, *Allegro*, is graceful and charming but not exciting. The energetic second movement, *Molto vivace*, serves as a scherzo and is dominated by its rhythm. The *Lento espressivo* which follows, has a warm melody, and could be styled a song without words. The finale, *Allegro assai*, is characterized by much forward drive but is not terribly convincing. All in all, a decent work, but there are several better ones from the same period such as those by Carl Reinecke, Richard Perger, and Robert Fuchs. Certainly this is a desirable CD, especially because of the Berger. Parts to both trios are available.

## Two Piano Quartets by Friedrich Gernsheim And Two String Quartets by Zygmunt Noskowski



Other than Dr. Carroll's excellent article on the string quartets of **Friedrich Gernsheim** (1839-1916), which appeared a year ago, and a CD review of his Second String Quartet, Op.31, this fine composer has not appeared in our pages. Gernsheim had the misfortune to be born within 6 years 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 was so eclipsed by him that their reputations and music virtually disappeared when that era was over. Names such as Rheinberger, Reinecke, Kiel, Bruch, Dessoff, and Herzogenberg, among many others, come to mind.

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. During the course of his life, he held academic and conducting positions in Cologne, Rotterdam and finally Berlin. He used his position as a conductor to advance the cause of Brahms' music. The two, while not close friends, carried on a correspondence for many years during which it was clear that Brahms had considerable respect and admiration for Gernsheim's work. This was no mere flattery on Brahms' part as he only very rarely praised the works of other composers.

It is gratifying to see that some of his fine music has at last been recorded. **Brilliant Classics CD#93997** presents the first recording of two of his three piano quartets—the first and the third. To have presented all three would have required an extra CD. As to why Nos.1 and 3 and not No.2, we can only guess, the obvious answers being either space considerations, or that someone felt Nos.1 and 3 were the most deserving. given that Brilliant Classics did not wish to release all three.

**Piano Quartet No.1 in E flat Major, Op.6** dates from 1860. It was begun while he was in Paris and so impressed Ferdinand Hiller, director of the Cologne Conservatory, that he offered the 21 year old Gernsheim a position as a composition teacher there. Stylistically, an early work, it shows the Mendelssohnian influence of his Leipzig training but also of the melodic influence of Rossini. The first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, begins with a optimistic theme full of forward drive. The second theme has a chorale-like quality. The extraordinarily fine second movement, *Allegro vivace assai*, though it starts quietly, quickly becomes a whirlwind scherzo. This is followed by an *Andante con moto*, with its sweet and lovely main theme. It is in the first subject of the finale, *Allegro con brio*, that one hears the influence of Mendelssohn with the rhythmically driving main theme. This is followed up by a lovely second subject. **Piano Quartet No.3 in F Major, Op.47** was composed in 1883, during his long tenure as director of the Rotterdam Conservatory. It is perhaps not a coincidence that it bears the same opus number as Schumann's only piano quartet. And, it comes at a time when Gernsheim was

greatly influenced by his friend Brahms. Although showing Brahms' influence, the quartet is not imitative. It is the big first movement, *Allegro tranquillo*, with its rhythmic phrases and dark tone color which brings Brahms to mind. But where Brahms generally has the strings play as a group against the piano, Gernsheim uses this technique only rarely. The second movement, *Allegro energico e appassionato*, a blustering and exciting scherzo, is for its time quite modern sounding. From the opening notes, it begins in dramatic and exciting fashion. However, Gernsheim plays with the listener, constantly interrupting the music just when one expects a theme to receive a more lengthy treatment. This creates a very impressive effect. The slow movement, *Andante cantabile*, brings relief with its long-lined soothing melody, it could almost be called a song without words. The finale, *Tema con variazione*, has for its main theme a simple, child-like tune which is first given out by the piano. In the several variations which follow, Gernsheim demonstrates his mastery of form and instrumental technique and finishes it off with an exciting conclusion. Highly recommended.



**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 of all the important Polish composers of the next generation

The first work presented on **Acte Prealable CD#234** is Noskowski's **String Quartet No.1 in d minor, Op.9** dating from around 1875. It combines main stream elements of Central European music with Polish folk music. The opening *Allegro con brio* begins quite unusually with a series of 8 crashing chords which herald a dramatic theme. The reoccurrence of these chords brings forth the more lyrical second subject. 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. This is a good, though not really a great work. **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 a passable *Allegretto vivace*, a scherzo dominated by its rhythm. Then there is an *Andante doloroso*, more mysterious-sounding than sad. Again the thematic material is not memorable. Lastly comes a very un-quartet-like *Allegro giocoso*, complete with a long, out of place violin cadenza and lackluster themes. No.2 is clearly less accomplished than No.1. The CD is, in my opinion, still is worth hearing.

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Giovanni Sgambati



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Paul Juon



Hans Huber



Carl Reissiger



Richard Stöhr



Wilhelm Berger



Friedrich Gernsheim



Zygmunt Noskowski

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