



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

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

***A Guide to Piano Trios-Part I  
Those for Violin, Viola and Piano  
Or 2 Violins and Piano***

***The String Quartets  
Of Cesar Cui***

***The Other Aus Mein Leben—A Septet by  
Josef Miroslav Weber for Violin, Viola  
Cello, Clarinet, Bassoon & 2 Horns***

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# The String Quartets of Cesar Cui

By Ilya Tomashkevsky



Cesarius-Benjaminus Cui (1835-1918) was born in Vilnius then part of the Russian Empire and today part of Lithuania. However, at the time, there were neither many Russians nor Lithuanians living there. The population was largely Polish and Jewish. Cui's father Antoine Leonard Queuille (later Russified as Anton Leonardovich Cui) was a French army officer who served in the Napoleonic invasion of

1812. Taken prisoner and released after the French defeat, he did not make it all the way back from Moscow to France but came to a halt in Vilna as Vilnius was then known. He settled down there, took a Polish woman for his wife and eventually became a Russian citizen, later being raised to the nobility. Cesar was one of five children. He and his brothers were all given the names of great military men—Alexander, Napoleon and so forth. But unlike so many other composers, the young Cesar showed no extraordinary musical talent. Nevertheless, he was given violin and piano lessons by local teachers and then later

when the then prominent Polish composer Moniuszko settled in Vilnius, Cui received some piano and composition lessons from him. Though at 14, he had started to compose small works, his father did not have a musical career in mind for him and at the age of 16, Cesar was sent to St Petersburg to an engineering college. After graduating in 1855, he did a further two years of graduate work in the same area after which, in 1857, he entered the army as an instructor in fortifications and remained there for the rest of his active life. Among his many students were several members of the Imperial family, including the future Tsar Nicolas II. As a specialist in the science of military fortification, he was sent to the front during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. There he gained an expertise in the subject which eventually led to an academic career and a professorship at various military academies. He did not leave the service, however, and subsequently rose to the rank of general. Cui's writing on the subject of military fortification made him famous in military circles and his books went through several editions and were often translated.

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## The Other From My Life—A Septet for Violin, Viola, Cello, Clarinet, Bassoon & 2 Horns by Josef Miroslav Weber

By Mattias Wildsteiger



It seems rather surprising that so little information is available about a composer such as Josef Miroslav Weber (1854-1906) who though he did not achieve the first rank of fame, was, nevertheless, during his lifetime a very successful, prominent violinist and prize winning composer. Very little is known about him. It is not even clear what his ethnic background was. The common assumption has always been that given his middle name was Miroslav, the Czech form of a name used throughout the Slavic world meaning glory and peace, that he was of an ethnic Slav. Critics

and scholars living at the same time as Weber made this assumption and in discussing his works sometimes found so called Slavic elements in the music. Even an expert such as Wilhelm Altmann, the famous chamber music scholar and author of the respected Chamber Music Handbooks wrote that Weber's "Slavic roots" could be heard in his chamber music. This assumption was no doubt bolstered by the fact that Weber used his middle name prominently and regularly. He often only went by Miroslav Weber. But, this can almost certainly be explained by the fact that he had no wish to be confused with the more famous Carl Maria von Weber.

But it is not so simple when you consider the fact that few if any living at the time spoke of ethnic Slavs from Bohemia as being Czech but rather as being Bohemian. However, Bohemia in its various forms is not a Slavic word but one derived from the Latin denoting a region and not a people. It was a region that was jointly populated by Czechs and Germans since Roman times. The region of Bohemia became a kingdom, then the seat of the Holy Roman Empire and finally part of the Habsburg Empire. Both Germans and Czechs alike, if they came from there, were called Bohemians. Hence both the Slav composer Dvorak and German violinist composer Hans Sitt were both, by this system, Bohemians. But what of Weber and his background.

There are several clues, none of them by themselves definitive, but taken together, they create a pretty strong argument for my conclusion. First, let us consider his names. Josef is used both among Germans and Czechs so nothing is learned from it. Miroslav, as noted, is a Slavic name. No German would have given this name to his

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## A Guide to Piano Trios—Part 1 For Violin, Viola & Piano

by R.H.R. Silvertrust

As I have noted in each article of *The Journal*, in which I have presented guides to the chamber music repertoire (to date only string trios), this Guide is part of a planned book on chamber music I am hoping to complete which will deal with string ensembles from trios to nonets. As I expect this will take several years to complete, I have decided to make those portions I have completed available to readers of *The Journal*. Its chief use should be as a reference source rather than an article. The main objective is to provide both professional and amateur chamber music players with a practical guide to the literature. But, as previously noted, it is a special type of guide which up until now has not existed in English; a guide which can be used as an aid to helping explore the wider world of chamber music, most of which in my experience, is virtually unknown to professional musicians as well as the listening public. However, this guide is by no means a mere compilation or an encyclopaedia of works, nor is it an academic treatise which analyzes how a composer actually wrote his music. I had origi-

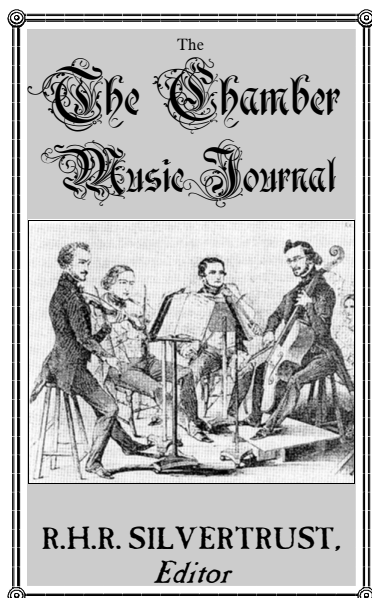
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**The Player & Listener's  
Authoritative Guide  
To the  
Wider World of  
Chamber Music  
Since 1990**

## A Guide to Piano Trios-Part I, Those for Violin, Viola & Piano as well as for 2 Violins and Piano

nally thought I would also try and let record collectors know if the works had been recorded and I mentioned this fact in the first two parts of this Guide dealing with string trios. However, it has become quite clear to me that this is really an insuperable task, especially since recordings disappear regularly and without warning. Hence, listeners would do well to see if they can track down recordings by searching on the internet. From this point on, I will not deal with the matter. Finally, I refer readers to Volume 24 No.2 (Winter 2013) of *The Journal* in which I discuss my treatment of famous works and the omission of experimental and atonal compositions

When one mentions piano trios, it goes without saying that one is almost certainly talking about works for violin, cello and piano. After the string quartet, this ensemble has been the one most often treated by composers. However, there are some very fine works for violin, viola and piano and even a few noteworthy efforts for two violins and piano. This article will discuss these works. The modern day piano trio has its antecedents in the baroque era trio sonata. Most of these works were primarily sonatas for the harpsichord or other precursors of the piano. Little had changed by the time of Haydn and Mozart. Haydn styled his piano trios as sonatas for piano with accompaniment of violin and cello. In most of these works, you could remove most of the violin part and the cello part altogether and nothing would really be lost. Such works are by no means piano trios in the modern sense of the word. And, what is more, the cello part was almost always nothing more than the doubling of the bass line of the piano. This was a direct descendant of the treatment and role it played in the baroque era. Even in Mozart's piano trios this is generally the case. While the violin gets its innings, the cello is kept well in the background, even in K.564. Only with the onset of Beethoven does the modern piano trio start to emerge. By Op.70 the cello is almost, but not quite an equal player. But when we reach Schubert, one can truly say the butterfly has emerged from its chrysalis. Of course, not every composer after Schubert took his lead and there are plenty of later trios which do not treat the voices, the cello in particular, as total equals. There are a couple of problems with the piano trio which the composer must surmount. The most important is writing in such a way that the strings can be heard over the piano. Schubert solved this in magnificent fashion and Mendelssohn, for the most part, did as well. This is more difficult in the case of the lower registers of the cello than with the violin. It is here that many composers have failed and have often produced an unintended muddy effect. Brahms comes to mind. The next problem is a proper blending of all three voices when none has a solo and all three are working together. And then there is also the problem of a satisfying bass. Of course, with the cello on board, this is not a great problem except when it is given the lead in its high registers and either the violin and more commonly the piano must provide the bass. However, when the cello is absent, it is not an easy thing for the viola to take its place. And, in fact, it really can't. The overall sound and weight of a trio for violin, viola and piano is going to be different no matter how hard the composer tries to mask the situation. This is not to say, however, that such an ensemble cannot be satisfying. To the contrary, when well handled, it can be very pleasing indeed.

### Trios for Violin, Viola and Piano

The Dane **Johan Amberg** (1846-1928) wrote a set of **Fantasiestücke, Op.12** which date from 1910. In four movements, they were obviously influenced by Robert Schumann and the first movement is even so titled. The second movement is called Day-break, the third called Fairytale and the last, Farwell. Like Schumann's they were intended for clarinet, viola and piano, but also like Schumann's a violin part in place of the clarinet quickly appeared. Pleasant, effective late romantic pieces.



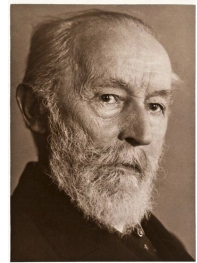
**Arnold Bax** (1883-1953) was born in London and studied at the Royal Academy of Music. Of independent means, he never needed to teach or conduct. His music shows many influences, perhaps the strongest of which is Impressionism. His **Trio for Violin, Viola & Piano, Op.4** dates from 1906. It is an engaging but at times texturally quite dense work. Echoes of Dvorak and Richard Strauss can be found therein.



The English composer **Thomas Dunhill** (1877-1946) wrote a **Phantasy Trio Op.36 for Violin, Viola and Piano**. It dates from 1911 and was dedicated to William Wilson Cobbett who had created and endowed a famous competition. The Cobbett Competitions were designed to encourage the younger generation of British composers to write chamber music. The rules of the competition provided an alternate format, the old English Fancy or Fantasia from the time of Purcell, to the traditional four movement work which had developed from Haydn onwards. Although it is in one long movement, there are various moods and tempi so that one could rightly say that there are several sub-movements which form the whole. The music is by turns pastoral, lyrical, dramatic and exciting.



In 1911, the French composer and organist **Joseph Ermend-Bonnal** (1880-1944), who was born in Bordeaux, contributed a small work, his **Petit Poeme for Violin, Viola & Piano**—an appealing but not exactly prepossessing work. Technically easy, it would be ideal for students although professionals could bring it to recital since the material is not trite. It shows its impressionist heritage but is quite accessible.



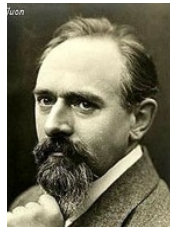
The Austrian **Robert Fuchs** (1847-1927) wrote two works for this combination. The first, **Seven Fantasy Pieces for Violin, Viola and Piano, Op.57** from 1896 must be included in the front rank of such works. The genre of Fantasy Pieces (Phantasiestücke in German) was more or less pioneered by Robert Schumann in the 1830's. These were generally a set of shorter pieces meant to be performed together. Each, colorful and with a different mood or character. In 1926, shortly before his death, he composed his **Trio for Violin, Viola and Piano, Op.115**. The opening Allegro molto moderato, recalls late Brahms in its tonalities. The overall mood is one of melancholy and unrest. But the Andante grazioso which follows is bright and upbeat, however, a stormy and dramatic middle section totally changes things until the main section returns. Next comes an Allegretto scherzando, a dance rhythm tinged with sadness but in the middle section, an upbeat lively section chases the clouds away. The finale, Allegro giusto, has a pressing, determined quality to its main theme. Once again, the music has a somewhat dark quality to it. This trio must be considered one of the very best works for this ensemble and it certainly deserves to be heard in concert.

**Gustav Jensen** (1843-1895) was born in the Prussian town of Königsberg. He studied composition with Siegfried Dehn and violin with Joseph Joachim and Ferdinand Laub at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. He subsequently pursued a career as a composer, performer and teacher, becoming a professor at the Cologne Conservatory. In the tradition of Robert Schumann, Jensen wrote his **Fantasiestücke for Violin, Viola and Piano, Op.27** in 1888. There are three movements. The opening Allegro con brio is full of spirit and optimism. The lovely middle movement Andante cantabile is at times reflective and then elegiac. The exciting finale rounds off a superb work.

The Belgian **Joseph Jongen** (1873-1953) composed his **Trio for Violin, Viola and Piano Op. 30** in 1907. Although it is nearly

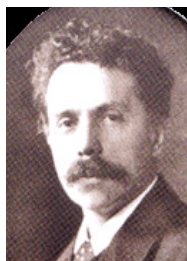


impossible to tell from listening to it, virtually all of the melodic material is derived from one theme, a simple folk melody from which Jongen manages to draw ever new melodic ideas. The lengthy opening movement, entitled Prelude, consists of two subjects. The heart of the Trio is found in the second movement, a theme and set of variations. The Finale, is actually another variation though not so marked. It is only now that we hear the theme in full. This Trio is, without doubt, one of the best and most important works for this ensemble. A concert work par excellence, it is in no way beyond the range of experienced amateurs.



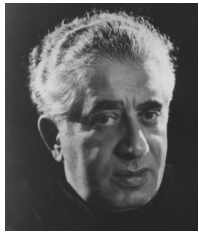
**Paul Juon** (1872-1940) was born in Moscow of Swiss-German parents. He entered Moscow Conservatory where he studied violin with Jan Hrimaly and composition with Anton Arensky and Sergei Taneyev. After graduating, he went to Berlin for further composition instruction from Woldemar Bargiel, Clara Schumann's step brother. He was widely regarded as an important

composer and his works were given frequent performance throughout Europe. He has been called the link between Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky. Juon was professor of composition at the prestigious Berlin Hochschule für Musik between 1906 and 1934. In 1901 he wrote his **Four Trio Miniatures**. They were taken from a series he had written for the piano, now unknown. He recognized the emotional content of these works could be better expressed by wind and string instruments rather than a solo piano and hence rewrote them as a small suite for a piano trio of clarinet or violin, cello or viola, and piano. The first piece, Reverie, is dreamy and reflective, expressing a yearning for things past. The second, Humoresque, is a perky dance with a hornpipe middle section that is quicker yet. The title to the third, Elegy, gives notice of the sad, but not tragic mood. The last, Dance Fantastique, begins as a slow, melancholy waltz, the middle section is quite lively and gay. These exquisite miniatures are among the finest in the late romantic literature, little gems.



**Robert Kahn** (1865-1951) was born in the German city of Mannheim. He studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin and later in Munich with Joseph Rheinberger. He worked for a while as a free lance composer before obtaining a position at the Hochschule in Berlin where he eventually became a professor of piano and composition. In 1922 he composed his **Trio Serenade, Op.73**, It was originally a

trio for Oboe, Horn & Piano. His publisher, the infamous Simrock, told Kahn he would never sell more than a few copies if that were the only combination by which the work could be played. He told Kahn point blank that he would not publish it unless he made at least a version for standard piano trio. Kahn, who apparently was very fond of this work, rewrote the Serenade so that it could be played by 7 different ensembles, including violin, viola and piano! It is a post-Brahmsian piece in one continuous substantial movement. It does, however, consist of two alternating parts, each with its own middle section or trio. The first part is a genial and relaxed Andante sostenuto which has for its trio section a lively Vivace. The second part consists of an Allegretto non troppo e grazioso, not terribly fast but elegant. It too has a faster middle section. A very effective work



The Armenian **Aram Khachaturian** (1903-1978) was born in the Georgian city of Tiflis now Tbilisi. He entered the Moscow Conservatory where he studied composition with Nikolai Myaskovsky. Eventually, he served as a professor there. The **Trio** dates from 1932 while Khachaturian was still studying with Myaskovsky. It initially appeared as a trio for

Clarinet, Violin and Piano but the publisher quickly released an alternate Viola part for the clarinet. The work is in three movements. The opening movement, *Andante con dolore*, is essentially a lyrical improvisation based on a slow, mournful melody derived from an Armenian folk song, and decorated with arabesque embellishments. In the second movement, *Allegro*, stormy episodes alternate with tender-dance like interludes. The finale, *Moderato*, is a set of nine variations based on an Uzbek folk melody, featuring several exotic intervals. This is not an easy work to play. For all practical purposes beyond all but the best amateurs.



It is somewhat surprising that the first work which the cello virtuoso **Julius Klengel** (1859-1933) wrote was not for cello but a **Trio for Violin, Viola and Piano in E flat Major, Op.1**. It is not really surprising that he wrote something for this combination, he wrote a lot of good chamber music, just surprising that his first work was for this combination. It is a Mendelssohnian work in four movements—*Allegro*

*ma non troppo*, *Andantino*, *Scherzo allegrissimo* and *Larghetto-allegro con brio*. It presents no great technical problems for the string players although the piano part is florid in the Mendelssohnian way. It is fun to play and hear and can be recommended to amateurs.



**August Klughardt** (1847-1902) was born in the German town of Köthen in Saxon-Anhalt. Although influenced by Franz Liszt, with whom he was friendly, he did not become part of Liszt's so called New German School. The **Schilflieder**, (Song of the Reeds) **Op.28** were composed in 1872 and were inspired by the poem of the same name by the German romantic poet Nikolaus von Lenau (1802-1850) The

*Schilflieder* are 5 fantasy pieces which describe a wanderer's day and evening in the forest and by a pond. Each has a different mood. The first, *Langsam*, is a slow dreamy movement. Next comes *Leidenschaftlich* (passionately). Then another slow movement, *Zart*. The fourth piece, *Feurig* (*con fuoco*) describes a summer storm. The finale, *Sehr ruhig*, is also quiet, describing the scene after the storm has passed. The piece was originally composed for oboe, viola and piano, but Klughardt hoped for greater exposure and wrote a part which could be played by either violin or oboe and it was so labeled.



**Hans Koessler** (1853-1926) was born in Waldbeck in upper Bavaria. He studied organ and composition with Joseph Rheinberger in Munich. He held a number of positions in Germany before finally taking up the position of Professor of Organ, Composition and Choral direction at the Music Academy of Budapest in the early 1880's. He

stayed there until his retirement in 1908. Bartok, Kodaly, Dohnanyi, Leo Weiner and Imre Kalman were all among his many students and he was widely regarded as the finest teacher of composition in Austria-Hungary during the 1890's and the first part of the 20th century. The **Trio Suite for Violin, Viola and Piano** was dedicated to his student and friend Ernst von Dohnanyi and published in 1922. The opening *Allegro* is written on a grand scale with lovely themes—including a very Hungarian dance—and a very effective coda. The second movement, *Romanze*, is filled with sentiment and emotion. Koessler follows this up with a delightful, gay *Gavotte*. The finale, *Vivace*, is full of attractive themes which are warm-blooded and distinctive. There are few works for this combination which can match the excellence of Koessler's *Trio Suite*.



**Emil Kreutz** (1867-1932) though born in Germany won a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music in London at the age of 16 and remained there for the rest of his life. He studied composition with Charles Villiers Stanford and Violin and Viola with Henry Holmes. For a time he became viola soloist. His **Trio for Violin, Viola and Piano in C Major, Op.21**

dates from 1891. Kreutz's teacher Stanford as well as the trio's dedicatee the piano virtuoso Eduard Dannreuther were both Brahms acolytes, so it is hardly any wonder that what we have here is a Brahmsian work. It is in four movements—*Allegro moderato*, *Presto*, *Andante sostenuto* and *Allegro alla marcia*. Having said it's Brahmsian, it is not imitative and only shows Brahms' influence. There is much of Stanford to be found in it as well. It is a really fine work and the viola, unsurprisingly is very well served. It is not particularly difficult and can be recommended both for concert performance and also for home music making. There is a second work the **Trio Facile for Violin, Viola & Piano in C Major, Op.32**. In three movements—*Allegro moderato*, *Andante*, *Allegro quasi marcia*—the title gives it away. It is intended for amateurs, its aristocratic dedicatee was one. Still, Kreutz took enough pains to make sure that this was a workman-like piece but no one is going to mistake it as a candidate for the concert hall, although it would make a good recital choice for students or amateurs. It sounds more English than its predecessor.



**Ignaz Lachner** (1807-1895) was the second of the three famous Lachner brothers. (there were some 16 children in all) His older brother Franz was the best known, having heavily traded on his youthful friendship with Franz Schubert, certainly more than Ignaz who also knew Schubert. Ignaz was taught (as were the others) organ, piano and violin. He studied violin with Bernhard Molique, a violin virtuoso and then

joined his brother Franz in Vienna where he too befriended and was influenced by Schubert, not to mention Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Though primarily known as a conductor, Lachner composed a considerable amount of music, much of it chamber music. His place in music is as a "Classicist-Romantic". Lachner bears the distinction of writing more trios for this combination than anyone else. It is not known if he ever composed a standard piano trio. Just why Lachner chose to write all of his piano trios for this combination is also not known. It is thought that they were either commissioned over time by viola connoisseurs or that

he simply liked the light sound created by the ensemble. In any case, it is fortuitous, for he greatly enriched the literature for this combination. **Trio No.1 for Violin, Viola & Piano in B flat Major, Op.37** dates from the late 1840's. The opening movement Allegro moderato begins with a Beethovenian melody. The second melody is a lovely Schubertian lied. The second movement, Andante con moto, opens with a simple and naive tune in the strings but almost immediately and rather suddenly, the music quickly changes into a wild syncopated dance. Again, a very original treatment which is fresh and pleasing. A muscular Scherzo follows, it is a mix of Schubert and Beethoven. The lovely trio section provides a superb contrast. The finale, Allegro, begins in a rather dainty fashion with a rhythmically off-beat melody. Then we hear a Mozartian melody which Lachner puts to excellent use, quickly following it up with an elaboration of the first theme.

**Trio No.2 for Violin, Viola & Piano in D Major, Op.45** dates from the early 1850's. It is characterized by wonderful Schubertian melodies throughout. The opening movement Allegro moderato begins with two double stops in the violin before the first subject, of a Beethovenian nature, is stated. However, this is not the main theme, which is dramatic and powerful and ultimately climaxes with a series of chords in the strings which recall the opening two chords of the movement. A substantial Andante, whose first theme harks back to Schubert, follows. Though not so marked, it is a theme with variations. Some of the variations recall those of Schubert's Trout Quintet. Instead of a scherzo, Lachner substitutes an Allegretto, whose propulsive main theme is of a pleading nature. A lovely trio section provides a fine contrast. The music of the finale, also marked Allegretto, brings to mind a rousing rustic, peasant festival.

**Trio No.3 for Violin, Viola & Piano in G Major, Op.58**, dates from the early 1860's. After a brief introduction comes an energetic Allegro con spirito. The second movement is an Andante. This very beautiful music is of the utmost simplicity which is surely part of its charm. An exciting, somewhat ghostly Scherzo, allegro assai, full of thrusting energy follows. The trio section with its romantic melody first sung in the viola provides a wonderful contrast. The finale, Allegro molto, in 6/8 has a chase motif as its main theme and is reminiscent of Schubert.

**Trio No.4 for Violin, Viola & Piano in d minor, Op.89** was completed in the mid 1870's. The opening Allegro giusto, begins with a long piano introduction in which the somber main theme is given out. Soon the strings join in and with them the dramatic pitch is raised to a high level of excitement. The lovely main theme to the Andante, quasi allegretto, has a child-like innocence to it but the contrasting second theme brings a bit of emotion to the front. Next comes a very interesting scherzo, Allegro molto. The lilting first theme moves forward effortlessly. A mocking second theme, rather than a development, makes a very brief appearance. The middle section is calm and lyrical. The exciting finale, Allegro molto, has a Mozartian quality about it. The first theme brings to mind a racing horse ride. It concludes with a stomping peasant section which elicits the lyrical theme.

**Trio No.5 for Violin, Viola & Piano in E flat Major, Op.102** dates from the 1880's. It begins quietly with a rather romantic Andante introduction which imperceptibly increases in tempo until it finally morphs into an Allegro. Quietly, the piano alone

presents the simple but attractive main theme to the second movement, Andante. The fleet scherzo, Allegro assai, is playful, while the strings have a lyrical duet in the short middle section. The finale, Allegro con spirito, begins with a celebratory melody, which is full of brio and excitement. The middle section continues in a more lyrical vein but then leads to the recapitulation and exciting coda.

The last of the six trios, **Trio No.6 for Violin, Viola & Piano in C Major, Op.103** was finished in the late 1880's. It opens with an Andante grave--Allegro, beginning with a slow and serious introduction. The main part of the movement is quicker and more light-hearted, and certainly sounds like the notes flowed from Lachner's pen without any effort on his part. The Andantino which comes next opens with double stops in the strings and almost sounds tragic but this mood quickly lightens as the clouds are burned away by the sun. Yet, the opening returns again and again creating a strange contrast. The Tempo di Menuetto sounds like something Haydn might have penned. Charming and very classical in mood. In the lively and engaging finale, an Allegro, Haydn's influence can be felt as the main theme consists of responding snippets. After much back and forth a wonderful second theme is brought forth by both strings.

One will note that there is little or no advance in style between the earliest and last of the trios despite the fact that more than 4 decades separate them. Lachner made no bones about the fact that he always wished to remain true to the style of his heroes—Mozart, Haydn and Schubert. Keeping that in mind, these are all first rate works that can be heartily recommended to any violin, viola and piano ensembles. That Lachner had Schubertian gift melody is undeniable.



The Swedish composer **Adolf Lindblad** (1801-1878) after studying at the music school of Uppsala University went to Berlin where he studied with Carl Zelter, Mendelssohn's teacher. He got to know Mendelssohn but his compositions cannot be compared to those of Felix. His **Trio for Violin, Viola & Piano, Op.10** dates from the early 1840's and is in four movements—Allegro, Allegro, scherzo molto, Andante con moto, and Allegro assai. This is a good work, not too difficult with decent thematic material and part-writing. If someone told you Beethoven had composed it around 1805, you would not have been surprised.

Of course, a quick mention of Wolfgang Amadeus **Mozart's K.498 Kegelstatt Trio** is in order, keeping in mind that the original was for clarinet, viola and piano and only later came the violin part as a replacement for the clarinet.

The German composer **Ernst Naumann** (1832-1910) was born in the Saxon city of Freiburg. He studied at the Leipzig Conservatory and then pursued a career as an organist, composer and Bach scholar. His **Trio for Violin, Viola & Piano in f minor, Op.7** dates from the early 1860's. It is in four movements—Allegro ma non troppo, Andante con moro, and Allegro risoluto. A relatively effective working in the style of Schumann and Mendelssohn.

A relatively effective working in the style of Schumann and Mendelssohn.



**Désiré Pâque** (1867-1939) was born in the Belgian city of Liege where he studied piano, organ and composition. He had an interesting, multi-faceted career which included founding the Sofia Conservatory in Bulgaria. He wrote five suites for violin, viola and piano between the years of 1891 and 1896. I am only familiar with his **Suite No.4 for Violin, Viola & Piano in B flat Major,**

**Op.27** which dates from 1893. It is in four movements—Allegro, Adagio molto, Allegretto scherzando e capriccioso, and Adagio religioso. From Paque's so-called early period, it shows the influence of his mentor Ferruccio Busoni more than any Franco-Belgian input of his conservatory days. It is an accomplished work, while not overly difficult, it does not play itself and requires some close listening. It can be recommended for both concert and home performance.



**Napoléon-Henri Reber** (1807-1880), was born in the Alsatian town of Mulhouse, He studied composition with Anton Reicha at the Paris Conservatory and thereafter pursued a career with considerable success as a composer, eventually becoming a Professor of Composition at the Paris Conservatory and a member of Academie Francaise. Among his many students

number Benjamin Godard, Jules Massenet, Pablo de Sarasate, and Wladislav Zelinski. He wrote 7 piano trios although I am only familiar with with **Trio No.6 in E Major, Op.34**. It dates from 1876. It was issued from its inception in two versions, one for standard piano trio, the other with the viola as substitute for the cello. It represents his mature style and provides a sound picture of the music appreciated during the Second Empire and Third Republic by the French public and its musicians. His piano trios achieved such popularity that by the time of the Fourth Trio, his publishers asked him to provide a viola part which could serve as an alternative to the cello and all of the later trios, including Trio No.6, have such a part. The piano writing of these trios often reflects the fact that pianists such as Chopin, Liszt, Moscheles and other virtuosos were the performers of his trios. Despite this, the part-writing is entirely balanced and the piano is never allowed to dominate but remains an equal partner. The opening movement, Allegro ma non troppo, begins with a quiet but pregnant introduction which blends seamlessly into the the stately main theme bearing march-like characteristics. It surprisingly dies away and leads to a tender episode alternately sung by the strings in an air of calm beauty before the march is reintroduced. The second movement, Larghetto ma non troppo, opens with a lovely string duet, with an undeniably vocal quality over a quiet piano accompaniment. Slowly tension is built which eventually rises to a very effective dramatic climax. Next comes a short Scherzo. The chromaticism coupled with the racing 16th note passages create an exciting picture. The finale, Allegro con brio, is a combination of Beethovenian thrust with French sensibilities.



**Max Reger** (1873-1916) was born in the small Bavarian town of Brand. Reger studied with Hugo Riemann and then was appointed to the prestigious position of Professor of composition at the Leipzig Conservatory. In addition to this he was widely regarded as one of the best living conductors and organists. In a career that only lasted 20

years, Reger wrote a prodigious amount of music in virtually every genre except opera and the symphony. Chamber music figures prominently within his oeuvre. His **Trio for Violin, Viola and Piano in b minor, Op.2** is an early work dating from 1891. Reger's works from this period are markedly different from his later works in which he sought to find a new path for tonality without resorting to the atonalism of Schonberg and his follows. Works from his early period, such as this fine trio, show the influence of Brahms, but in many respects move beyond him, which Reger himself stated was his goal. This is especially apparent in the use of melodic phrases which exceed the normal 8 measure limits then standard. The emotionally powerful opening movement, Allegro appassionato ma non troppo, begins in a dark, searching vein, which though reminiscent of Brahms also shows that Reger, even at this early stage, is striving to go beyond the older master. The wonderful lyricism that one hears shows the composer's clear affinity for vocal music. The middle movement, marked Scherzo, is an unusual mixture, at times like an intermezzo, at other times like a heavy-footed scherzo. Reger's choice for a finale, Adagio con variazione, is quite unusual. The genre of theme and variation was a favorite of Reger's and even in his early works, he clearly showed himself a master of this form. The opening Adagio theme is leisurely, lyrical and somewhat sad. Five large variations follow. The first variation and the final two both in mood and tempo are close to the opening theme, while the middle two, which are full of passion rise to what is the dramatic climax of the entire work. Unjustly ignored, this fine work would make an excellent choice for the concert hall but also can be warmly recommended to amateur trio groups.



**Carl Reinecke** (1824-1910) was, musically speaking, a renaissance man. He was regarded at mid 19th century as one of the finest concert pianists before the public. As a composer, he produced widely respected and often performed works in every genre running the gamut from opera to orchestral to chamber music. As a conductor, he helped turn the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra into a group with few if any peers. As

its director, he helped the Leipzig Conservatory become what was widely regarded as the finest in the world. As a teacher of composition and of piano, he was considered to have few if any equals. Among his many students were Grieg, Bruch, Janacek, Albeniz, Sinding, Svendsen, Reznicek, Delius, Arthur Sullivan, George Chadwick, Ethel Smyth, Felix Weingartner, Karl Muck and Hugo Riemann. In his time, Reinecke and his music were unquestionably regarded as first rate. His **Trio in B flat Major, Op.274** was produced in 2 versions, clarinet, horn & piano and violin, viola and piano. It is amazing that 82, Reinecke's creative juices were not dried up, but even more amazing is that unlike so many others, he moved with the times. As a young composer Mendelssohn and Schumann were his models but his music did not remain frozen in time. This is a late Romantic, even post Brahmsian, work which is effective in either version. In the opening movement, Allegro, the mood begins in triumphant fashion but then becomes more hesitant. The development is quite dramatic and the role given the piano approaches the orchestral against a dark introspective role in the other voices. The movement is painted on a big tonal canvas—rich in ideas, updated harmonies and with an instrumental treatment which shows the sure hand of a master composer. The second movement is

entitled *Ein Märchen*—Andante. Briefly, the piano creates the atmosphere of a Schumann fairy tale. Next comes a rhythmic, muscular Scherzo with two trios. In the finale, *Allegro moderato*, the fine use of harmony and chromaticism, which is well in advance of Brahms, shows the extent to which Reinecke continued to evolve. This trio is one of the finest of its type.



The German musicologist and composer **Adolf Sandberger** (1864-1943) studied with Josef Rheinberger in Munich. His **Sonata for Violin, Viola and Piano, Op.4** dates from 1906 and was dedicated to the famous conductor Felix Weingartner, who was also a composer. The dedicatee gives some indication of what we might expect. It is a work full of dramatic episodes, rather well-written. On the front of the Breitkopf & Härtel edition, it is marked “Mittelschwere”, i.e. medium difficulty. But technical speaking, though not for beginners, this is not a particularly difficult work. Its four movements—*Mit Leidenschaft* (with passion), *Langsam und ausdrucksvoll* (slow and full of expression), *Rasch* (quick) and *Rasch und Kräftig* (quick and powerful) are effective and convincing. Here is a very good work suitable for both concert and home.



The Parisian violinist and composer **Eugene Sauzay** (1809-1901) contributed his **Piece en Trio for Violin, Viola & Piano, Op.7** which though published in the 1850's appears to have been composed sometime before that. In one short movement, *Modere*, it is a moderately pleasing trifle which might give pleasure to amateurs but is not a candidate for concert performance.



**Philipp Scharwenka** (1847-1917) was born near Posen, then part of Prussian Poland. He moved to Berlin in 1865 to complete his musical education. A good pianist, he primarily devoted himself to composition and teaching at several of Berlin's leading conservatories. His **Trio for Violin, Viola & Piano in e minor, Op.121** appeared in 1915. The idiom is late German Romantic, which by that time was certainly a retrospective style. The appearance of this work in 1915, rather than say in 1890, no doubt played a role in its not receiving the attention it should have for it is a first class piece. The trio is in three movements. Although the opening movement is marked *Andante tranquillo*, the music is far from tranquil. There is an sense of restlessness and yearning which can be heard immediately from the opening bars and then throughout the movement. The middle movement, *Un poco lento*, is quite short. Somewhat ponderous, it has a Beethovenian profundity. One might even consider it a very lengthy introduction to the finale, *Allegretto con spirito*, which is played *attacca*. The *Allegretto* while exciting and with much forward drive, nevertheless has a certain heaviness which acts as a restraint until a *moto perpetuo* section is finally reached. A first class work not to be missed.

**Robert Schumann's Märchenerzählungen, Op.132** for either clarinet, viola & piano or violin, viola & piano which dates from 1853 can be said to have kicked off the whole genre of fantasy pieces for this combination. Of course, they must not be missed by any violin, viola and piano ensemble.

You would have thought from the beautiful cover that the German publisher Simrock created for the **Trio for Violin, Viola & Piano in c minor, Op.6** that the Anglo-Irish composer **Theodore Xavier Tanner** (1880-1948) was somebody. But no, he was nobody so to speak. He attended the Royal College of Music where he may have studied composition under his fellow countryman Stanford. His name has all but disappeared like a rock thrown into water. He appears to have written only one chamber work, the above mentioned four movement trio from 1905. The movements are *Allegro*, *Allegretto*, *Andante* and *Grave*—*Allegro molto*. I wonder if anyone from Simrock actually played through the work or just decided it looked good on paper. There are a lot of notes here and the work is not particularly easy to play and again I would not be wasting my time mentioning it except, once again, for the fact, that there are not hundreds of works for this ensemble. Someone may find this work worthwhile.



**Henri Vieuxtemps** (1820-1881) was born in Verviers, Belgium. He received his first violin instruction from his father, subsequently studying with Charles de Bériot. He toured Europe for several decades and was regarded as one of the leading violinists of his time. Vieuxtemps also devoted himself to composition, having studied composition with Simon Sechter in Vienna, and Anton Reicha in Paris. His **Duo Concertant for Violin, Viola & Piano, Op.39** dates from the early 1860's. I hesitate to include it in that it is virtually a triple concerto for all three instruments and requires, no surprise here, players of the highest technical caliber. It is in three sections.: A short opening *Allegro* followed by an *Adagio* and a substantial finale, *Allegretto*. The music shows considerable melodic flair and is captivating from start to finish.



A true servant of chamber music **Richard Henry Walthew** (1872-1951) born in Islington (London) was, nonetheless, well back in the second rank of British composers from that era. A student of Hubert Parry at the Royal College of Music, chamber music was his thing, and he not only wrote a fair amount of it, he sponsored and took part in numerous chamber music concerts in London for many years. In 1897, he composed his **Trio in c minor**. It was originally for clarinet, violin and piano, but like so many other similar works, a viola part for the clarinet was created at the time of publication. It is a decent work though not a candidate for the concert hall and it must be said that the viola part looks to be a mere transcription of the clarinet and as such is not, with all of the typical quick clarinet flourishes, well-suited for the viola.

The German **Adolf Weidig** (1867-1931) was born in Hamburg and subsequently after completing his studies emigrated to Chicago in 1892, where he served as a teacher and assistant director of the American Conservatory. His **Kleines Trio for Violin, Viola & Piano in d minor, Op.9** was composed about the time he emigrated. In three movements—*Moderato*, *Adagio cantabile* and *Rondo, allegro non troppo*—we are not dealing with a terribly inspired work but rather one apparently designed for young students and for that purpose it can be warmly recommended..



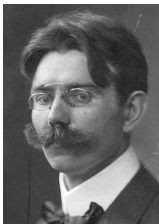


The German composer **Philipp Wolfrum** (1854-1919) studied with Josef Rheinberger in Munich. Not a terribly important figure in German musical life, he nonetheless contributed a **Trio for Violin, Viola & Piano in b minor, Op.21**. A follower of Liszt he chose to mark his four movements in German—Nicht schnell doch sehr belebt (not fast but certainly very lively) Etwas gegragen (somewhat solemn), Mit humor (with humor) and Ziemlich rasch un mit Schwung (nearly quick and with swing). This is an also ran, not bad, not particularly memorable, not inspired but not banal. It is okay, however, were it not for the fact that this combination is so thinly served, I would not suggest you give it a look-see.

**Trio for Violin, Viola & Piano in c sharp minor, Op.46** by the surprisingly little known, given the high quality of his work, Viennese composer **Julius Zellner** (1832-1900) dates from the 1880's although it was not published until after his death. In three movements—Allegro con brio, Andante & Allegro molto agitato, it is a Brahmsian work. First rate and well worth consideration.

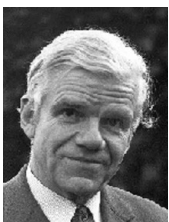
### Trios for 2 Violins and Piano

The origins of the trio for 2 violins and piano differs from that of the standard piano trio. Rather than the trio sonata, it probably began life as a double concerto which soon found a harpsichord reduction of the orchestra. Most of the concert works for this combination were composed before the time of Mozart and are not really chamber music in the modern sense. With this combination, for the most part, only the piano can provide an adequate bass although one violin on its G string could, though it is usually difficult for it to overcome both the other violin and piano so that it can be heard. Additionally, its antecedents usually convince composers to continue the tradition of a kind of intimate double concerto rather than a real integrated trio. Most of the works for this combination are not for concert performance, at least by professionals or skilled amateurs, but are pedagogical and aimed at students. The composers of these works, with only a few exceptions, such as Hans Sitt and Friedrich Herrmann, did not exactly lavish much of their skill on these pieces and for the most part the thematic material is weak. Therefore I see no point to even mentioning these, even in passing.



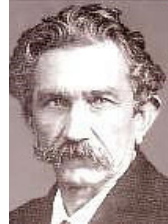
**Joseph Haas** (1879-1960) was born in the Bavarian town of Mairhingen. He studied privately with Max Reger, then later at the Leipzig Conservatory. A career as a composer and a professor at the Stuttgart and Munich Conservatories followed. His **Kammertrio for 2 Violins & Piano, Op.38** dates from 1938. It shows the influence of his teacher Reger but is far more accessible. Very

suitable for concert performance but not beyond experienced amateur players.



**Kurt Hessenburg** (1906-1994) was born in Frankfurt on Main. After studying at the Leipzig Conservatory, he pursued a career as a composer and teacher at the Frankfurt Conservatory. His **Trio in G Major for 2 Violins & Piano, Op.26** was completed in 1942. In three movements—Moderato, Menuetto and Introduction and finale—the style is mostly neo-classical with a

modicum of dissonance..

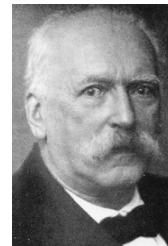


The Swiss composer **Hans Huber** (1852-1921) born in the town of Eppenberg, studied at the Leipzig Conservatory with Carl Reinecke after which he pursued a career as a composer and as professor and then director of the Basel Conservatory. The **Sonata for Two Violins and Piano in B flat Major, Op.135** dates from 1913 and is without doubt one of the finest Romantic works for this ensemble.

It opens with a brief Maestoso introduction which leads seamlessly to the main section Allegro tranquillo. It starts calmly with great lyricism. After an the first subject in the minor, a joyous and triumphant second theme is introduced. An extraordinarily fine Menuetto in the minor comes next. It retains its dance-like quality, while at the same time exploring the new tonalities of the late Romantic movement. The third movement, Romanze, adagio ma non troppo, begins in a highly romantic vein with a warm, affectionate melody. The second theme though just as romantic provides a very fine contrast. The finale, Allegro non troppo, begins with a brief whirlwind introduction before it is swept away by the gorgeous main theme which rushes forward with a jovial sense of purpose.



**Bohuslav Martinu** was born in the small Czech town of Polička. He studied briefly at the Prague Conservatory. In 1934, he completed his **Sonata for 2 Violins & Piano**. The work is often neo-classical, tonal mostly, but not in the traditional sense. In three movements—Allegro, Andante, and Allegretto, Its tonality is very modern but it is not an atonal work. Suitable for experienced players seeking a reasonably accessible modern work.



**Arnold Mendelssohn** (1855-1933) was a distant relation to Felix Mendelssohn. His early schooling took place in Berlin and Danzig. He subsequently worked as an organist and teacher at the Cologne Conservatory where Paul Hindemith was among his many students. The **Trio for 2 Violins and Piano in a minor, Op.76**, was composed in 1917. It is in the Neo Romantic style.

The opening Allegro virtually thrusts forth with an explosion of sound before the dramatic, but more lyrical theme is fully fleshed out. The second movement, Adagio, begins with a long series of somber chord progressions in the piano which do not prepare the listener for the bright question and answer duet that the violins introduce before settling into a lovely romantic duet. This then is developed with an unusual neo-romantic harmonic accompaniment in the piano. The third movement, Un poco vivace, is a clever, rhythmically interesting scherzo. The superb finale, Sostenuto, piu allegro, is clearly the high-point of the trio. It begins with a neo-baroque, slow introduction. The allegro begins in a declamatory fashion and leads to an exciting theme with considerable forward motion. The lyrical second melody is introduced in masterly fashion and keeps things moving right along. An excellent choice for concert.



**Darius Milhaud** (1892-1967) was born in the French city of Marsailles. He studied composition at the Paris Conservatory with Charles-Marie Widor and became a member of the so called "Les Six", a group of modernist French composers who were active during the first part of the 20th century. His **Sonata for 2 Violins & Piano**

dates from 1914, quite close to his conservatory days. A gentle work, not much drama here. In three movements Vif, Lent and Tres vif. A forward-looking impressionist work.



The **Suite for 2 Violins & Piano in g minor, Op.71** by Moritz Moszkowski was immediately hailed by critics as a spectacular and brilliant work. **Moritz Moszkowski** (1854-1925) was born in Breslau, Prussia (now Wrocław, Poland). He studied music in Breslau, Dresden and Berlin. He not only enjoyed a career as a brilliant and prominent concert pianist and respected conductor, but was also a fine composer and a first rate teacher.

Among his many students were Thomas Beecham, Frank Damrosch, Josef Hofmann and Joaquin Turina. The nature of the Suite can be gleaned right from the opening measures of the first movement, *Allegro energico*. gorgeous chordal double stopping in the strings creates a volume of sound hardly imaginable from two instruments. The main theme, romantic and highly attractive, carries all before it. A second theme, just as lovely is more wayward and has a yearning quality to it. The second movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins in the form of a lyrical waltz, charming and elegant. A slow movement, *Lento assai*, comes third. After a brief piano introduction, the strings enter with a lovely, but somewhat sad melody. The music is at once reflective and at the same time graceful. The high-spirited finale, *Molto vivace*, begins with a buoyant and playful subject. The music races along effortlessly until the appearance of the slower and very romantic second subject. A virtuoso showcase that cannot fail to bring the house down but requires players of high technical accomplishment.



The English composer **Edmund Rubbra** (1901-1986) born in the town of English town of Semilong composed a his one movement **Fantasy for 2 Violins & Piano, Op.16** in 1925. It is essentially pastoral in mood. It is not going to make a great impression but is workmanlike.



The Norwegian **Christian Sinding** (1856-1941) was born in the small town of Kongsberg near Oslo, Sinding, after studying music in Oslo, attended the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied violin with Henry Schradieck and composition with Salomon Jadassohn and Carl Reinecke. Sinding's two serenades for two violins and piano are widely regarded as among the best of the romantic repertoire. His ability to

draw tremendous tonal color from two soprano instruments is truly surprising. **Serenade No.1 for 2 Violins & Piano in G Major, Op.56** dates from 1902. In five movements, it begins with an upbeat, rather quick and energetic *Tempo di marcia*. The romantic second theme is softer and quite lyrical. The melancholy main theme to the second movement, *Andante*, is closely related to the second theme of the first movement and features a lovely duet between the two violins. A short, sprightly *Allegretto*, is placed between the two slower movements. A second *Andante*, which serves as the fourth movement, highlights Sinding's melodic gift. The energy of the finale, an *Allegro*, bears a resemblance in feel with the opening movement.

**Serenade No.2 for 2 Violins & Piano in A Major, Op.92** dates from 1909. Like the First Serenade, it, too, is in five movements. The opening *Allegro non troppo*, is rather similar in mood to the opening of the First, upbeat and bright it uses the echo effect quite tellingly. The second theme begins as a lyrical melody but the seeds of its heroic treatment can clearly be heard. The introduction to the *Andante sostenuto* which follows, is warm, intimate and has a charming simplicity. The romantic second subject, somewhat dark in tone but not mood, soars. A wonderful, lilting *Allegretto* serves as an intermezzo between the two slow movements. The *Adagio*, which comes next, begins calmly with a warm and romantic melody that builds gradually to a climax both stormy and dramatic. The finale, *Deciso ma non troppo allegro*, is gay and dance-like, untroubled in mood. These 2 serenades are among the best works you can find for this combination, it is an excellent concert vehicle for two violinists



**Hans Sitt** (1850-1922) was, during his lifetime, regarded as one of the foremost teachers of violin. Born in Prague, he studied at the Conservatory there and after a brief concert career served as Professor of Violin at the Leipzig Conservatory from 1883 on, and authored several important studies for that instrument, some of which are still used. But he also wrote a lot of chamber music.

His **Concertino for 2 Violins & Piano in d minor, Op.133** dates from 1920. In the tradition of the double concerto, it is designed for students and was advertised that it could be performed in the first three positions. Yet, it is very well written, the thematic material is not trite and while no professional ensemble is likely to consider it, it would make a fine choice for student recitals and competitions.

The **Kleines Trio in d minor, Op.9** by **Adolf Weidig** (1867-1931) mentioned in works for violin, viola and piano can also be performed as a work for 2 violins and piano.

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# The Other From My Life—A Septet for Violin, Viola, Cello, Clarinet, Bassoon & 2 Horns by Josef Miroslav Weber

(Continued from page 2)

son. Weber is a German name in origin meaning weaver, however, it can be commonly found as a name among Slavic families as well, although this said, it is far more common for ethnic Germans than for ethnic Slavs to have this surname.

Next, we have the fact that Weber was born in Prague in 1854. Prague, virtually from its founding in the early middle ages, right up until 1870, was an overwhelmingly German city. The oldest German university was Charles University of Prague. Today, we speak of Hochdeutsch, the German spoken in Hannover, or Burgtheaterdeutsch, the German spoken on the stage at the national theater in Vienna, as being that finest German, like Oxbridge or BBC English—the Queens English. But at the time of Weber's birth, one spoke of Prager Deutsch (i.e. the German spoken in Prague) as being the finest German. So, while there would have been some Slavic families living in Prague at the time of his birth, most ethnic Bohemian Slavs from this era, such as Dvorak and Smetana, were not born there or in any of the other the big cities of Bohemia (e.g. Pressburg today Bratislava or Brunn today Brno), but in small towns and villages.

I have been unable to find the names of Weber's father or mother. But I have been able to learn that Weber's father was a director of the Deutsches Landestheater (the German theater) in Prague. The German Theater in Prague was the second most important opera house in the whole of the Habsburg Empire after the Imperial Theater in Vienna. Mozart gave the premiere of Don Giovanni there. It is highly unlikely that a Slav would have been chosen to serve as its director. In fact, it was more difficult for a Slav at that time to make a name for himself in Prague than in Vienna, which is why so many fine Bohemian musicians of Slavic origin such as the Wranitzky brothers and Franz Krommer, emigrated to Vienna, where they were able to rise to the front ranks.

Next, we know that Weber spent most of his life in Germany. Something he probably would not have done had he held strong Slavic national feelings such as Smetana and Dvorak. Even Fibich, the product of a German-Czech marriage, returned to Prague after his travels and education in Leipzig and Paris. By then, Prague was no longer a predominantly German city. A Czech national theater designed to compete with the German Theater in Prague was being built. It was not necessary for a Slav to move to Vienna to make his name. The fact that Weber chose to live his entire life abroad is quite significant and indicates that he probably did feel himself to be Slavic or at the very least did not have any strong nationalist feelings.

Bolstering this argument, we know about his wife and son. Weber married a German girl, Kathinka Dambmann, who had been born in Ohio but returned to Germany. Interestingly, her mother's maiden name was Weber. Josef and Kathinka had a son, Hans Weber. These facts further seem to indicate that he considered himself an ethnic German and not a Slav.

Until more information is available, and who knows when if ever that will be, I believe the following theory to be the most likely: Namely that Josef Miroslav Weber was the product of an ethnic German father and Czech mother, hence the name Miroslav. (it

could even be that his mother was the product of a mixed marriage and that his grandfather had been a Slav and he was given the name as a remembrance), But, unlike Zdenek Fibich, whose father was Czech and mother Viennese and who was given a joint German and Czech education, Weber most likely did not receive a similar education. His father was probably too prominent in the German community to allow such a thing and hence it is most probable that Weber was given an exclusively German education, something which would not have done much to create an sense of Slavic identity.

I have been unable to uncover any indication that Weber ever wrote in Czech. Of his published compositions, the inscriptions are in all in German. Fibich, for example, in his Op.42 Quintet for cello, clarinet, horn, violin and piano (alternate version for standard string quintet-2 violas) puts the markings to each movement in German and Czech. Compare that to Weber's Quintet where each of the movement subtitles are only in German. On the manuscript to his violin concerto, we find written in German in his own hand "Allen Vorurteilsfreien gewidmet" (dedicated to those who are unprejudiced) His operas were all written in German, and so on and so forth.

I believe it is important to have some idea as to Weber's ethnic background especially when it comes to discussing his Septet, which bears the subtitle *Aus Mein Leben* (from my life) and which must be considered as autobiographical. Unlike Smetana's String Quartets which were first published by the Czech firm of Urbanek in Prague and which first bore the subtitle in Czech *z mého života* before the German firm of Peters translated it to *Aus Mein Leben* upon its publication into German, by which name it has become known, Weber's Septet bears no Czech inscriptions.

Moving on from what he considered himself to be, ethnically speaking, let us consider his life. As noted, Weber was born in Prague where his father, a musician, was director of the German National Theater. His first music lessons, which were on the violin, were from his father who was also a fine violinist, at the age of six. At the same time, he was sent to study organ and the famous Prague Organ School. Weber quickly showed himself to be a prodigy on the violin and at the age of eight, he gave a private recital before the Austrian Emperor. This kind of thing was not an everyday event. Only the likes of Mozart, Ummel and players of their ilk were given such an opportunity. The recital was a triumph and the young Josef was taken on a year long concertizing tour by his father, much as Mozart had been, throughout the Austrian Empire. Then, upon his return to Prague, he was given private lessons in piano and composition. In 1870, at the age of 16, Weber entered the Prague Conservatory where he studied violin first with the famous teacher Anton Bennewitz and later the renowned virtuoso Ferdinand Laub. Upon graduating in 1873, he obtained the position of solo violinist at the princely court of Sonderhausen in the German province of Thuringia. It was here that he became interested in chamber music. In the summer of 1874, he was back in Prague as the conductor of the summer opera season, quite an honor for a 20 year old. A year later, we find him as Konzertmeister (concertmaster) of the ducal court of Hessen-Darmstadt. He was soon elevated to the post of conductor and it was here that he formed a string quartet and began to familiarize

himself with the chamber music literature. He remained for eight years, leaving in 1883 to assume the position of Assistant Music Director (Kapellmeister of the important Royal Prussian spa town of Wiesbaden. By 1889, he was the Music Director. Weber stayed for four more years before taking up the post of assistant concertmaster of the Royal Bavarian Orchestra in Munich in 1893. It was here that he had the opportunity to get his operetta and chamber music performed at concert venues. In 1901, Weber became head concertmaster of the Munich Orchestra and at the same time led the foremost quartet in that city. He was on friendly terms with Richard Strauss who often led the orchestra and corresponded regularly with several important composers in Vienna, including Mahler and Schoenberg. In 1906, he suffered a stroke and died at the age of 52.

Ruhiges Zeitmaß (♩ = 76)  
*ruhig binden*

Joseph Miroslav Weber

Weber's Septet in E Major was composed in 1899 during his time in Munich. It is for the highly unusual combination of violin, viola, cello, clarinet, bassoon and two horns, thus insuring that it is highly unlikely to receive concert performance. Septets are not performed live all that often. The most famous, of course, is the Op.20 of Beethoven which is for the combination of violin, viola, cello, bass, clarinet, horn and bassoon. It was one of the most popular works written by Beethoven and one of the most frequently performed in concert during his lifetime. As a result, other works by such composers as Adolphe Blanc, Conradin Kreutzer, Franz Berwald. Charles Woods followed. There

were other septets for slight different combinations, the most common being 2 violins, viola, cello, clarinet, Nowadays, the odds of hearing any of these works, other than that of Beethoven or possibly Blanc, are slim to nil. By 1900, performances of septets (and you must remember that live performance was the only way music could be heard at that time) were not all that common, if they ever were. Which brings up the question of why Weber would write a work requiring 2 horns, the second horn being the factor that would almost guarantee the works non-performance, even by home music makers. There are two possible answers. The most likely being that it was meant for and request by a group of players from the Royal Bavarian Orchestra. Of course, there is also the possibility that Weber felt the addition of a second horn would create the kind of dreamy atmosphere the work requires. We, of course, will never know for sure. One thing is certain, however, and that is that this Septet is truly a sublime work deserving of performance. It was first published by the Munich firm of Josef Aibl and was awarded first prize by the Wiener Tonkünstlerverein (Vienna Composer's Society) It is, as the title *Aus mein Leben* suggests a programmatic work and more than that, an autobiographical work.

The first movement is titled An der Ufern der Moldau, Jugendträume (On the banks of the Moldau, youthful dreams) The tempo given is Ruhiges Zeitmass (a quiet or calm tempo). Before I go further and describe the music, consider this: The title for the movement, as is for the entire work, in German. More importantly, Weber refers to the river which flows through the middle of Prague as the Moldau.

This is the German name for the river. No Slav would call it that. To the Slavs it is the Vlatava. This is what Smetana called in his tone poem *Ma Vlast* (My Country). It only got translated later into German as *Die Moldau* by Smetana's German publisher. And more than this, the tempo marking is not even in Italian, let alone Czech, it's in German—*Ruhiges Zeitmass*—indicating that Weber was influenced by the New German School of Liszt, Wagner and Richard Strauss. Yet, the writer in Cobbett's *Cyclopedia* and Wilhelm Altmann in Volume 4 of his *Chamber Music Handbooks* find in the music the "Slavic roots" of his homeland to which he would never return, In fact, the music probably pays tribute to the Prague of his youth, a German Prague, which by 1899 no longer existed for by then Prague was prominently Czech. From the horn melody (example above right) as one critic put it, one can well imagine a young boy on a warm day sitting along the banks of the slow flowing river, gazing dreamily at it. The running 16th notes of the cello part (see example above left), aptly evokes the flowing of water. A second theme, march like and thrusting brings to mind all of the challenges and excitement which lie ahead for the young man. The theme provides a powerful contrast to what has come before and will be heard again in the final movement.

Ruhig Zeitmass ♩ = 76

(Echo)

The second movement is titled *Studentenzeit, Lebensideale* (Student Life, life's ideal). The tempo marking is Scherzo with metronome markings being given. The busy, bustling fugue with which the movement begins, given out first by the violin, brings to mind the hectic and joyful life of student days at university. Exciting new ideas, much to do, to see, hardly a moment to reflect. The writing is jovial and full of good spirits and the whole thing is magnificently executed as the theme is seamlessly passed from voice to voice. It is particularly im-

pressive in the way the horns are so integrated into the weave of the whole. The entire thing seems to be of one cloth.

The change of mood which we find in the third movement could not be starker and more striking, especially given the joy of what has come before. The movement is titled *An den Gräbern seiner Lieben* (At the graveside of his love), and is as one might expect a sad, funeral dirge. It is the longest and clearly the center of gravity for the Septet. The seriousness of life has come upon the composer with this loss. The winds create the mood before the main theme, a distraught plaint is sung by the violin in its lowest registers.

The finale is marked *Im Kampfe um's Dasein, Getäuschte Hoffnungen, Jugenderinnerungen* (In a struggle for existence, Disappointed hopes, Memories of youth). There is no tempo marking other than a metronome time. The music opens with a frenetic theme. Not desperate, yet full of angst. This is followed by a rather solemn section, conveying the disappointment felt for unrealized hopes. Quickly mixed with this one hears memories from youth as themes from the first movement are heard. In struggle for Existence, Disappointed Hopes, Memories of Youth

The Septet reveals Weber to be a master of compositional technique as well as part-writing and a composer with a melodic gift which serves to evoke tone pictures which are extremely vivid. It surely was no accident that this work received a prize. It is a true pity that the ensemble is so unusual, though it must be said that it is extremely effective and the use of two horns seems entirely justified. The music presents no unusual technical difficulties and can be warmly recommended to amateurs as well as professionals. I am sure any group which brings this work to concert will be well-rewarded by its audience for their efforts.

To the best of my knowledge, the Septet has only been recorded once on Orfeo CD No.-182891. The music is imprint from Edition Silvertrust.

# Cesar Cui's String Quartets

(Continued from page 2)

Although his reputation in military circles, which at one time far outshone his name as a composer, today virtually no one knows of these accomplishments and he is only remembered as a composer. One who was part of a group of Russian nationalist composers who came to be known as the Mighty Five. (Rimsky Korsakov, Borodin, Mussorgsky, Balakirev and Cui) As for his music, he is remembered only for one short work, despite the fact that he was quite a prolific composer. Nor is he remembered for his work as a music critic, but during his lifetime, he was one of the most prominent and influential. He achieved a considerable reputation both within Russia and throughout Europe..He contributed close to 800 articles and reviews which appeared in various Russian and foreign newspapers, musical magazines and journals of concerts, recitals, musical life, new publications on music, and musical personalities. In his articles, he often attempted to promote the music of Russian composers who were his contemporaries, especially the works Borodin, Rimsky Korsakov and Mussorgsky. Foreign composers often did not fare so well although he was partial to the music of Berlioz and Liszt. To some extent, he also admired Wagner's goals for opera but he did not like the technical methods the German used to achieve them. Like many a man who lived the better part of a century, he did not like the newer crop of composers, such as Rachmaninov, who were up and coming toward the end of his life.

While studying engineering in St. Petersburg, Cui did not altogether forget music. In his spare time, he continued to compose small works and embarked on a career as a music critic, writing reviews in any number of the many musical newspapers in the capital. Then, in 1856 while doing graduate work in St. Petersburg, Cui met Mily Balakirev who encouraged him to seriously consider a career as a composer. At this point, Cui started to compose works on a larger scale and his first orchestral work was premiered three years later by Anton Rubinstein at a concert of the Imperial Russian Musical Society. It is difficult to understand how Cui could have composed more than 200 works, many of them sizeable, in the following decades, all the while either on active military duty or working as a professor. He tried desperately hard to make his name as an opera composer but none of his 17 operas enjoyed any success and none entered the standard repertoire. This is not to say that Cui was unknown as a composer. Far from it, despite the fact that his first opera William Ratcliff was unsuccessful, Liszt nevertheless praised it on numerous occasions in highest possible terms. Cui received many awards and accolades both from Russian and foreign musical societies. The bulk of his compositions were for voice and piano, including a large number of children's songs. Four of his operas were based on children's fairytales. Additionally, he wrote a fair amount of works for piano as well as some instrumental sonatas and three string quartets. Despite the fact that in recent years there have been a few recordings of his music and some works have either been reprinted or have appeared in new editions, it would not be entirely inaccurate to say that he remains known for one short piece: *Oriente*, the 9th of 24 miniatures for violin and piano which were eventually published in a collection as his Op.50 under the title Kaleidoscope. This one piece lasting but a few minutes has achieved world-wide fame and has appeared in dozens of different arrangements. When one asks why he is not today better known as a composer, the answer most often heard is that he was not particularly talented when it came to large scale works, his operas being a case in point. And unlike the other members of the Mighty Five, he did not compose symphonies or orchestral tone poems. As far as chamber music goes, Cui composed some 16 works. The bulk of these are for violin or cello and piano. There is one work for flute and piano as well as three string quartets. Besides being a pianist, Cui also knew how to play the violin, hence he was eminently suited to write works for this combination or for string quartet. What is surprising, however, is that he never wrote a piano trio, piano quartet or piano quintet. One would have thought he might have tried his hand at it. In this respect, he was like his younger contemporary, Glazunov, who was also a pianist but unlike Cui was not also a string player, and hence it is even more surprising that Glazunov wrote seven string quartets, but like Cui never a work for piano and strings.

It is interesting to reflect, that with the exception of Borodin, Arensky and Gliere, the best string quartets of the Russian Nationalist School are not by its best known composers but mostly by its lesser known members. For a start, Balakirev and Mussorgsky did not write any quartets and those of Rimsky Korsakov and Glazunov are not particularly inspired or appealing, certainly not placed alongside those of Blumenfeld, the first 2 Gretchaninovs, Kopylov, Persiani, Pogojeff, Sokolov, the first Steinberg, Alexander Taneyev (his cousin Sergei was, like Tchaikovsky, no Russian nationalist), the early quartets of Zolotarev and last but not least Cèsar Cui.

Allegro risoluto. ♩ = 120.

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Violoncello.

It is curious that the talentless émigré son of M.P. Belaiev, the greatest benefactor of Russian chamber music, has nothing good to say about Cui's music in his very short unenlightening entry in *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, while Wilhelm Altmann, perhaps the greatest chamber music scholar and critic of all time writes, in his *Handbuch für Streichquartettspieler* (Handbook for String Quartet Players), that Cui's string quartets have every right to be called noteworthy. The most Russian sounding of Cui's three string quartets is the first, **String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.45**. It was completed in 1893, by which time Cui was no youngster, but 58 entering the last part of his long musical as well as military career. In the first movement, *Allegro risoluto*, not only the thematic material but also the rhythm of the main theme gives the music an undeniable Russian flavor. (see example left) It has been suggested by some crit-

(Continued on page 15)



ics that it is Russian sea music while others have heard the galloping of horses. Either way, it immediately captures the listener's attention and is developed by Cui in such an ingenious way as to hold that attention throughout the movement. The second theme (see left) is lyrical but also very Russian and provides an excellent contrast to the first. It is worth noting that

the part writing, not only in this movement but throughout the quartet, is really excellent. The supporting parts and harmonies are quite good but what is even more pleasing for each of the players is that the melodic material is divided virtually equally among the four voices and each gets ample opportunities to shine.

Cui places a piquant, fleet Scherzo, *Allegro non troppo*, next. Against a light, pulsing accompaniment, the viola presents a very deliberate theme, again quite Russian and perhaps taken from a peasant folk-dance, (See the example on the right) As before, the theme is passed from voice to voice, at first as repetition but then varying it by means of a lively development until the music reaches an almost feverish pitch of excitement. One can almost image exuberant peasants stomping out the dance at a rustic wedding.

A slow movement, *Andantino*, in some ways recalling Borodin, while in no way being imitative (all of the so-called Belaiev composers often sound like each other—no doubt the influence of Rimsky



Korsakov) comes next. The middle section, *Andante un poco religioso*, is somewhat more somber and rather impressive in its beauty.



The finale, *Allegro non troppo*, with its exciting accompaniment rhythm in the first violin, along with the actual theme given out by the cello, give the music a highly Russian flavor. (See the example on the left). Shortly thereafter, the second violin joins with the first while the viola supports the cello, which creates an even higher dramatic pitch. Cui develops this masterfully. But then, what comes next, that is to say, the second theme, is a total surprise. Without warning, we are taken from what some would say was another Russian sailor's song to the plains of Spain!

Perhaps Cui had just heard a performance of Bizet's *Carmen*, in any event, the second theme, (example on right) with its superb use of spiccato, certainly sounds as if he had been. And, of course, the theme sounds as if it were right out of *Carmen*. So, to speak of providing a contrast, here, is almost superfluous. It is, indeed, hard to imagine a greater contrast. Yet, this is not a criticism because it somehow works, it is not jarring at all but surprisingly sounds right. Cui's development of both themes which are eventually intertwined with each other before the thrilling coda is masterful.

Though some might not agree, in my opinion, this is the most memorable of his three quartets as the thematic material makes the strongest impression. It must be admitted that, technically speaking, this is not a work for beginning ensemble players, but experienced amateurs will find it well within their means and quite rewarding. Any quartet which brings the work to the concert hall is sure to enjoy a triumph from their audience.



Fourteen years were to pass before Cui returned to the string quartet genre. His **String Quartet No.2 in D Major, Op.68**, composed in 1907 begins with an Andante introduction and then seamlessly transforms into an Allegretto. The music is charming and graceful, but I would not call it compelling, certainly not in the same way as those from the first quartet. Still, it is worth noting that there were very few composers who at 72 were producing works of similar quality.



The opening movement begins with a muted, moderately short Andantino introduction which sweet and tender. (example above on the left) Sweet though it is, it does not raise expectations of anything exciting in the offing, which perhaps was intentional, a conclusion one might well draw upon hearing the main part of the movement, Allegretto. It's quite plain to see that the main theme of this Allegretto is entirely stated in the Andantino. (example on below) Cui develops it, of course, and it is done quite well, but one does

not really get the feeling that anything new is being added. It is charming, ingratiating and a perfect example of what the composers of the Belaiev circle, mostly students of Rimsky Korsakov, were producing. It is, without doubt, better than what the young Glazunov was producing in the 1880's but it does not, in my opinion, match the works of Kopylov or Sokolov, to name but two of the circle.



Next comes a scherzo, Vivace non troppo. It is pleasant, very well done and more engaging than the first movement. Appealing though it is, it can not be called exciting. Again, this another perfect example of the work of the Belaiev Circle. Though there is little dramatic impact, nonetheless, here, one can say that this is more or less on a par with anything they were producing. There is a nicely contrasting trio section, the contrast being provided by a change in tempo rather than a move to the minor or some other mood.



28] Poco più mosso



The third movement, Andante, begins in quiet, somewhat sad fashion. The treatment is rather good with the main theme first being given out by the first violin and then handed off to the cello. The whole thing is rather promising, especially at a change in tempo, where the cello breaks loose in dramatic fashion and is soon supported by the viola. (see example on the left) It is perhaps the best episode of the

entire work. Unfortunately, the moment is soon over, and what follows, while not exactly trite, is a considerable let down from drama Cui had so finely created.

And, sad to say, when we come to the finale, Allegro non troppo, trite or banal are perhaps applicable. The main theme is based on a Russian folk song. There is a lot of sawing and chordal playing but the treatment is weak, in fact, the main melody itself is rather threadbare, and Cui is unable to hide this fact. I do not think it too harsh to say that the finale mars what otherwise might be an acceptable work, though not for the concert hall. Altmann praises this quartet and finds it preferable to the First. I disagree entirely, except to say that it is technically more accessible to amateur players. But, it is not as if the First has insurmountable technical difficulties. It does not. Nor does it require professionals to play it.

Now we come to Cui's third and final string quartet: **String Quartet No.3 in E flat Major, Op.91**. Cui's own age, at the time he wrote the quartet was not too far behind from the opus number. He was a little short of his 79th birthday. It was 1913, but there is nothing to indicate this fact and the quartet might well have been composed in 1875. Though seven years separate the Second from the Third Quartet, there are considerable similarities between the two and one might almost think that they were composed one after the other. The opening bar of the Andante introduction sounds a bit as if the players are tuning up. Perhaps Cui, the composer of the famous Orientale, knew of the joke Western musicians who performed in the Orient made about their audiences. It is said that oriental audiences thought it was traditional for every concert to begin with a short piece called "Too-Ning" which sounded somewhat oriental and was thought to be a tribute to their Eastern audiences. The story is probably apocryphal



1 Allegro.  $\text{♩} = 132$ .

The introduction serves the same purpose as the one in the Second Quartet but the treatment is better and a certain sense of expectation, if not suspense, is built up by the introduction. And the introduction is not used to present the main theme of main part of the movement in its entirety. In fact, it does not present the theme at all, which is, in my opinion rather more effective.

Again, like the Second Quartet, the music of the main section, Allegro, is pleasing and appealing, and while not particularly exciting, (example on left) it does tend to hold one's interest somewhat better.

In part this is due to Cui's use of an unusually rhythmic ostinato accompaniment, at one point, in the cello. (example on the right) Further, there is a quote from Tchaikovsky's massive piano trio. Hard to know for sure if this was intentional, but one must assume that Cui, as a leading music critic and reviewer, would have been familiar with the piano trio.

Allegro non troppo.  $\text{♩} = 88$ .

In second place, as in the Second Quartet, we have Scherzo, Allegro non troppo. The treatment is almost identical to the Second Quartet in that it is very accomplished from a technical standpoint. Again, it makes a stronger impression than the first movement. The trio section provides a fine contrast. All in all a first rate movement.

The third movement, Andantino, without question, is the strongest of the entire work. In part, this is due to the tempo of 100 to the quarter note. However, the melody itself is a true Shepherd's Plaint, expertly treated. (see example on the right)

Andantino.  $\text{♩} = 100$ .

Here is a movement which can stand comparison to any of those produced by his Belaiev Circle compatriots, which makes it all the more poignant when we come to finale.

Once again, one can say that Cui has "run out of gas" or at the very least been very unfortunate in his choice of a main theme for his finale. The Allegro in 6/8 is some sort of childrens' folk song or dance. Banal is a suitable term for it. And it must be said that it ruins what has come before, and even the second theme, which is noticeably better, cannot save the situation.

This is frustrating, to be sure. What has come before is good, well worth hearing and even deserving of occasional concert performance, but no professional group in their right mind is going to traipse onto a concert stage and play a work with a finale like this.

Can the quartet be recommended to amateurs? Yes, certainly based on its first three movements. And while the main theme of the finale is unfortunate, its treatment is professionally handled and the second theme is of higher quality and of more interest.

So then, to sum up, in reviewing Cui's three string quartets, one must note that he did not really take up the genre until rather late in his life. He was 58 when he finished the First Quartet, 72 at the time of the Second and close to 80 when he finished his last. And like many composers who enjoyed a long life and who were still composing toward the end of it, his music shows little indication of any advance past a certain date. This, in part, was due to his temperament. He was by nature a conservative. As a music critic, he was well aware of new developments, but he did not, for the most part, like them. All three of his quartets, musically speaking are from the Russian romantic era of the late 1870's and 1880's.

Without doubt, the First Quartet is his best. It is good from start to finish. The thematic material in each movement is compelling and appealing. The music holds one's interest and it is good to play. It is one of the most Russian sounding of quartets from this era. Perhaps only Alexander Kopylov's String Quartet No.1 can come close in this respect. As such, I believe this quartet deserves to be revived, to receive concert performance and to make the stands of amateurs.

What then of the other two. From a technical standpoint, almost everything Cui wrote was accomplished. As such, he could have, should he have so chosen, taught composition. Where he falls down, as I have noted, is in the unfortunate choice of thematic material in the finales to both No.2 and No.3. I suppose you could say he wrote six out of eight decent movements. But the reality is, and not only in music, that things first and last are the most important. And here it must be admitted that in both String Quartet No.2 and No.3, Cui fails. The outer movements in both works are the weakest. The fact that the scherzos and andantes (second and third movements) in each work are good, simply does not save the situation, at least for concert performance.

In all fairness, in closing, I should draw your attention to the fact that likes and dislikes in something such as music is a subjective and sometimes highly personal affair. Take, for example, Altmann's evaluation of Cui's first two quartets (he was not familiar with the third) in his Handbook for String Quartet Players. He likes No.1, but No.2 is far superior in his opinion. It makes me wonder if he ever performed it or heard them at all. Maybe so, and he just liked No.2 better. Certainly, as you know by now, I do not agree. But, I suggest you make up your own mind. All three works have been reprinted by Edition Silvertrust and are available. And while there are no commercial recordings of the quartets, on the Edition Silvertrust website ([www.editionsilvertrust.com](http://www.editionsilvertrust.com)) there are generous soundbites of each movement lasting some minutes.