12 Traditional and progressive nineteenth-century trends: France, Italy, Great Britain and America

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Introduction

As has clearly been demonstrated in the previous chapters, the art of the string quartet was taken to its heights by the Austro-German composers of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that equally fertile traditions began to emerge elsewhere. These trends, discussed in this and the subsequent chapter, signal the development of the genre into a medium adopted by composers worldwide, who gradually exploited it as a vehicle for the most concentrated, the most experimental, the most radical as well as the most intimate compositional thought.

Austro-German influence nevertheless remained predominant; in Britain, for example, even the major string quartet ensemble of the second half of the nineteenth century, the (English) Joachim Quartet, was led by a German, Joseph Joachim. American composers had still to find their own voice; and whatever Italian ensembles there were continued to perform the works of the Austro-Germans to the exclusion of almost everything else, so immersed were their fellow countrymen in vocal music, and particularly in opera and in the instrumental traditions fostered by the Viennese Classical composers. Despite the relatively large number of string quartets composed in France during the nineteenth century, no distinctively French string quartet tradition developed until the late 1880s, when César Franck (1822–90) and his circle of composers contributed to a native quartet tradition in France, albeit with a strong German seasoning.

France

String quartet composition in France had passed through the phase of the lyrical, elegant *quatuor concertant* and the *quatuor concertant et dialogué*, in which the material was fairly evenly distributed amongst the parts, often as a conversational sequence of solos.[1] Established in Paris by Giuseppe Cambini's (1746–1825) *c.* 150 works in the genre, as well as those of his numerous successors, it was superseded by the *quatuor brillant* – essentially

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a concertante violin solo accompanied by the three other instruments.[2] This type of quartet was introduced by Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755–1824) and cultivated largely by violinist-composers such as Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766–1831), Pierre Baillot (1771–1842) and Pierre Rode (1774–1830).

In mid nineteenth-century Paris, serious chamber music was performed regularly in major concert series such as the Société Alard et Franchomme (also known as Société de Musique de Chambre), the Société des Derniers Quatuors de Beethoven, the Société des Quatuors de Mendelssohn, the Séances Populaires and, to a much lesser extent, the Société Sainte-Cécile.[3] Matinée and soirée concerts were also held in Parisian private homes. The works of the Austro-German composers predominated, as Momigny confirms, and Baillot, having been introduced to Haydn in 1805 by the Bohemian composer Antoine Reicha, established a quartet in 1814 expressly to introduce the works of Haydn, Mozart and Boccherini as well as Beethoven's Op. 18 quartets to a wider Parisian public.[4]

Baillot's former composition teacher, Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842), who was director of the Paris Conservatoire from 1822, wrote six string quartets (the first three dedicated to Baillot), each in four movements. The early works display some influence of the Viennese Classical composers – the symphonic introduction and first movement of the First Quartet (1814) and the scherzo and finale of the Second Quartet in C (1829; adapted from an earlier Symphony in D), for example, smack of Beethoven; but they also demonstrate operatic influences – note the dramatic recitative in the third movement of the Second Quartet, the treatment of the opening recitative of the Third Quartet and its cantabile, aria-like Larghetto scherzando. From his Third Quartet onwards, the influence of the legacy of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven becomes increasingly evident, notably in the finales of the Third and Fourth Quartets and much of No. 6. Cyclical elements are fundamental to all six of Cherubini's works – for example, the scherzo of No. 4 is related to the main themes of the first two movements, and midway through the finale of No. 6 themes from the first three movements are recalled. However, despite Schumann's esteem for his quartet style, Cherubini's works did not receive lasting recognition, based as they were on a blend of French, Italian and Viennese traditions.

A mix of Viennese and French influences is demonstrated in the works of Pamphite Aimon (1779–1866), Napoléon-Henri Reber (1807–80), Alexandre Boëly (1785–1858), Auguste Morel (1809–81) and J. B. Charles Dancla (1817–1907). Reber was a belated classicist, remembered almost entirely for his *Traité d'harmonie* (Paris, 1862). According to Saint-Saëns, 'he seemed like a forgotten man from the eighteenth century, wandering through the nineteenth as a contemporary of Mozart might have done, surprised and somewhat shocked by our music and our ways'.[5] Boëly was

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arguably more progressive, looking towards Schumann in his four quartets Opp. 27–30, composed in the late 1820s, while Morel, self-taught in composition, was praised for the 'clarity, expressiveness, and . . . strong melodic sense' of his five quartets, two of which were awarded the Prix Chartier.[6] Dancla established his own quartet in 1838. This group's concerts at Hesselbein's home were a regular feature of the Paris season from the 1840s, and doubtless inspired Dancla to compose many of his fourteen string quartets between 1839 and 1900.

Several composers who achieved greater notoriety in operatic circles followed in the wake of torchbearers such as Cherubini. Prominent among them were Félicien David (1810–76), Ambroise Thomas (1811–96) and Charles-François Gounod (1818–93). Thomas' String Quartet in E minor Op. 1 (1833) confirms his admiration for Beethoven and incorporates 'passages of skilful contrapuntal writing'.[7] David published a Quartet in F minor (1868) and left at least three further string quartets in manuscript. His music, according to Hugh MacDonald, 'falls into the French tradition of being agreeable diversion, strongly coloured but emotionally naive'.[8] Gounod composed at least five string quartets, but allowed only one, a work in A minor (1895), to be published. A String Quartet Op. 17a (1887–8) by one of his (and Franck's) pupils, Sylvio Lazzari (1857–1944), also lay dormant for some years before it reached the Société Nationale de Musique (1888) and the public domain in 1904.

The Anglo-French composer George Onslow (1784–1853) was arguably the predominant quartet writer in France during the first half of the nineteenth century, contributing some thirty-seven quartets, most of which were printed between 1810 and 1840. The early ones Opp. 8, 9, and 10 seem immature but clearly demonstrate Viennese Classical influence, especially that of Haydn. The introduction of Beethoven's late quartets to Parisian audiences from 1828 caused Onslow first to denounce them yet later to gain inspiration from them, particularly in the works from his Op. 46 onwards, which display a wealth of harmonic, rhythmic and structural invention.[9] Vestiges of Schubert and Mendelssohn are also evident in Onslow's later, more progressive works, which demonstrate a clear sense of architecture and an harmonic language that was among the most interesting of the period.[10]

In 1855 Edouard Lalo (1823–92) became a founder-member and violist (later second violinist) of the quartet established by Jules Armingaud to make better known the quartets of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schumann. His own String Quartet Op. 19 (1859) was firmly based on such models. Its opening Allegro is characterised by violent contrasts, yet is Classical in mould, while the Andante, in the relative minor, features three themes which undergo effective developmental treatment. The G minor scherzo (Vivace) also treats, and with striking chromatic interest, three ideas,

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the last of which is a rhythmic ostinato, while the ensuing trio (E♭ major) offers more lyrical fare. The finale, more pathetic than violent, pursues its Beethovenian objectives, its development incorporating some skilful contrapuntal writing. Not well received on its premiere in 1859, the work was revised in 1880 as Op. 45 but has never been fully recognised for its pioneering role in the development of the genre in France.

The establishment of the Société Nationale de Musique in 1871 to promote 'Ars Gallica' symbolically heralded the further development of French chamber music. Meanwhile, Alexis de Castillon (1838–73) had published a Quartet in A minor (1867) and a movement ('Cavatine') from an unfinished Quartet in F minor (1869). Some quartets/quartet movements by another Franck disciple, Guillaume Lekeu (1870–94), date from 1887, notably an unpublished *Commentaire sur les paroles du Christ* and a Quartet in D minor; but it was not until nearly twenty years after the Société's foundation that Franck's String Quartet in D (1889–90) marked the beginning of a golden age for the genre in France, even though a good proportion of those composers whose string quartets were premiered under the auspices of the Société (notably Franck and his pupils Ernest Chausson and Vincent d'Indy) were greatly influenced by Wagner.

Franck's Quartet is his last completed work. Composed between 20 October 1889 and 15 January 1890, it is ambitious in scale and makes complex use of cyclical form; its quasi-orchestral textures sometimes appear to be on the verge of bursting the seams of such an intimate chamber music genre. D'Indy tells us of the pains Franck took with the lengthy first movement and the beautiful slow movement and the work certainly incorporates some of its composer's most profound and compelling thought.[11] The unusual structure of the first movement has been likened to a gigantic Lied, the central section of which, including a fugal development, is itself a complete sonata-movement. As in the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the introduction to the finale recalls themes from the scherzo and trio and the Larghetto, while the principal theme of its sonata-form structure is derived from that of the first movement and subjected to augmentation and much contrapuntal development. Towards the end there are also reminiscences of the second movement – a Mendelssohnian scherzo whose trio makes fleeting reference to the principal cyclic idea – and the ternary, contemplative Larghetto, which has its own sharply contrasting ideas and reminiscences. While at times looking back to Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann, Franck invents new and individual solutions, even quoting himself, taking up a few motifs or phrases from his Violin Sonata, the last section of his *Prélude, Aria et Finale* and his Piano Quintet.

Foremost among Franck's pupils who perpetuated his ideals were D'Indy and Chausson. D'Indy (1851–1931), together with Charles Bordes and

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Alexandre Guilmant, founded the Schola Cantorum in 1894, broadening its narrow initial remit for sacred music performance into a general music school founded on Franckist principles by the turn of the twentieth century, which eventually rivalled the Paris Conservatoire as France's pre-eminent musical centre. His musical objectives, though fervently nationalistic, embraced Wagnerian principles for French music, favouring the Teutonic fondness for continuity, thematic links and cellular development. He attached special importance to the string quartet, composing his first essay in the genre at the age of forty, completing two others and leaving a fourth incomplete at his death.

Each of D'Indy's first two quartets is based on a motto theme and their employment of short phrases, pregnant with dramatic possibilities, recalls Beethoven's legacy, particularly his 'late' quartets. D'Indy was not totally satisfied with his First Quartet in D Op. 35, premiered in 1891, because it does not derive all of its melodic elements from a single motivic idea. Nevertheless, the four-note motif (reminiscent of the 'Bell motif' from Wagner's *Parsifal*) of the sustained slow introduction plays a significant unifying role in the ensuing sonata-form movement as well as in the second movement (*Lent et calme*) and finale (*Assez lent*). The third movement is an interesting combination of Lied and rondo forms in which the motif plays no part.

D'Indy realised more closely his ideal in his much acclaimed Second Quartet in E major Op. 45 (1897), based on a four-note germ that generates practically the whole work. Not until 1928–9 did he venture into the medium again, when he composed his Third Quartet in D♭ Op. 96 in a markedly different, more refined Classical style. The initial impression is one of austerity, conveyed by the widely spaced intervals of the cyclical motif announced in the introduction and relentlessly pursued in the remarkably cohesive sonata-form movement that ensues. The *Intermède* contrasts a stately dance with a more lyrical 'trio' section, while the slow movement comprises a theme based on the germ motif and seven variations unified by two harmonic and rhythmic ideas. The germ motif appears in inverted form at the opening of the finale, initiating a rhapsodic rondo with five refrains and culminating in the reappearance of the theme of the slow movement, triumphantly resounded by the first violinist.

D'Indy also completed, at the request of Ernest Chausson's (1855–99) family, the concluding seventy-three bars of the third movement (*Gaiement et pas trop vite*) of his compatriot's Quartet in C minor Op. 35, left unfinished in sketch form at Chausson's premature death. This movement has similarities with the Scherzando vivace of Beethoven's Op. 127. D'Indy decided to end the movement, begun in the subdominant key of F, with a return to the key of C major. The first movement (Grave) also looks to the past, incorporating echoes of Franck in the way in which the cello's noble introductory

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theme is treated as the subject for the movement's whole development – somewhat surprising when one considers Chausson's works of the period. Also surprising, and somewhat bemusing, is his citation, at pitch and with the same harmonies, of the opening phrase of Debussy's String Quartet. That Chausson was also an enthusiastic Wagnerite is nowhere more evident than in the central slow movement (*Très calme*) as well as in the skilful employment of thematic transformation, even though use of such a technique has resulted in a tendency towards wearisome repetition.

Chausson was for a time an important influence on Claude Debussy's (1862–1918) life and career. Being rich and well-known in the *beau monde*, he had been able to introduce Debussy to a wide variety both of socially 'smart' artists such as Proust and also many of the more bohemian set of painters, writers and musicians. Debussy's solitary Quartet in G minor (1893) caused a sensation with the Parisian audience on its premiere by the Quatuor Ysaÿe at the Société Nationale (29 December 1893). Some were bewildered; others recognised Debussy's attempt to make himself at home in the world of Franckian rhetoric; still others showed particular enthusiasm for the work's new syntax, inspired partly by Borodin, whose quartets Debussy had heard at the concerts of Russian music organised by Belaiev during the Paris Exhibition of 1889. Particularly striking is its thematic treatment of brief ideas, freedom of rhythm and tempo, textural variety and striking fluidity of line, form, harmony and modality.

The opening germ idea of the work, with its descending second and third, is modally harmonised. It is reshaped for cyclic occurrence in both the second and fourth movements. The first movement's contrasting Massenet-like material makes its effect without ever undermining the forward motion of the music, and such a combination of energy and lightness is maintained in the Scherzo, which is adventurous in its percussive writing and use of ostinati. Debussy's mastery of the medium is clear, as is his absorption of gypsy and Javanese sounds. The gentle, muted ternary Andantino has often been linked with Borodin's influence, but its chromaticism, tending to whole-tone emphasis at times, is already personal to Debussy himself. The finale begins hesitantly before settling into a mood that drives forward to a brilliant and spirited conclusion. Sometimes criticised as looking backward to Franck, notably from a formal aspect, Debussy's Quartet nevertheless proved to be a beacon that was to guide many future efforts in the genre.

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) dedicated his Quartet (1903) to his teacher Gabriel Fauré, who was not so flattered as to conceal his opinion that the finale was a failure. Debussy, whose influence is also clearly evident, was more enthusiastic, and his advice (which Ravel followed) was not to alter a single note. Alteration could have meant improvement: the contrasts within the finale seem exaggerated, and the third movement verges on the

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self-indulgently rhapsodic form. Yet Ravel was already too experienced a composer to intend the sort of half-hearted *obéissance* in the direction of the Franckists made, for example, by Debussy in his Quartet. The traditional forms are used as pegs on which to hang an impressive display of cyclic thematic derivation, but the themes and harmonic processes are so characteristic of Ravel himself that any awkwardness in their structuring is of minor account.

The two principal themes of Ravel's sonata-form first movement were clearly designed with the potential for developmental combination in mind. They also generate most of the significant material for the rest of the work; the second has particularly close connections with the scherzo and the first with both slow movement and finale. Throughout Ravel's melodies have a characteristic modal cut and are integrated with striking mastery of instrumental colour, yet the lyrical outbursts are held firmly within the Classical form. The scherzo comes second, characterised by its juxtaposition of pizzicato, bowed and tremolo phrases and percussive rhythmic effects that are reminiscent of Ravel's Spanish-inspired works; its alternation of 6/8 and 3/4 metre heightens this Hispanic flavour. It is interrupted by a muted slow section in which its two dominant themes appear. The rhapsodic, ternary slow movement illustrates Ravel's tonal freedom, commencing in A minor-D minor and concluding in a G♭ major that has been intermittently present throughout the movement. The evocative finale, a loosely-knit rondo with its principal idea in 5/8 metre, was probably inspired by Russian folk models. Its second idea, based on the work's first four notes, leads one to expect a cyclic roll-call of the work's main themes in the coda; however, Ravel was probably too proud to indulge in such an obvious unifying ploy, preferring to allude rather than to assert.

In the same year as Chausson composed most of his unfinished quartet, Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), one of the principal personalities involved in the establishment of the Société Nationale, penned his First String Quartet Op. 112 (1899), his first chamber work without piano. This was retrospective in its revival of what is to some extent a *quatuor brillant*, dedicated to the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. Counterpoint is characteristically well to the fore with fugato episodes in three of its four movements, while the development section of the finale incorporates a notable recall of the work's elegiac opening. This opening and the freely lyrical slow movement, founded on two contrasting themes, clearly provided Ysaÿe with an excellent vehicle for his noble and expressive style, while the first movement's più allegro, the rhythmic, energetic scherzo and the finale show off the first violinist's virtuoso capability. Saint-Saëns's Second Quartet Op. 153 (1919) also looks backward – to the eighteenth century and beyond. Emile Baumann has described it as 'very simple – even Mozartian',[12] and the Classical refinement

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of its outer movements certainly supports such an observation. Its various modal cadences perhaps suggest even earlier influences, but its abrupt key changes and its adventurous, wide-ranging tonal scheme (notably in the Molto adagio) confirm its twentieth-century origins.

Fauré's (1845–1924) String Quartet in E minor Op. 121 (1924), his only chamber work without piano, is also retrospective and proved to be his last work. Fauré admitted to his wife that he was 'terrified' at the thought of following Beethoven in the quartet genre and he kept his indulgence in the medium very quiet until it was near completion.[13] The extent to which his confidence was at a low ebb is demonstrated in a letter shortly before his death requesting that the quartet be 'given a trial in the presence of a small group of friends who have always been the first audience of my works: Dukas, Poujaud, Lalo etc. I have confidence in their judgement, and so I leave the decision to them whether this quartet should be published or destroyed.'[14] He never heard the work performed, but his advisers were adamant that his doubts were ill-founded. The opening Allegro moderato, in sonata form, is firmly based on two principal themes extracted from Fauré's unfinished Violin Concerto Op. 14, composed over forty years earlier. Its argument, involving notable dialogue between the first violin and viola, demonstrates a remarkable economy of expression, as does the content of the jovial finale, a quasi-rondo structure. However, the core of the work is the profoundly expressive central Andante, with its intricate polyphony and elegiac viola melody, which many have interpreted as the composer's melancholy prefiguration of death.

The masterpieces by Franck, Debussy, Ravel and Fauré were to stimulate numerous talented French successors to take an interest in the string quartet. Albert Roussel, Maurice Emmanuel, Jean Roger-Ducasse, Charles Koechlin, Florent Schmitt, Darius Milhaud, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Henri Sauguet, Pierre Menu, Henri Dutilleux and many others wrote significant works in the genre, but few of these have gained a permanent niche in the repertory.

Italy

An Italian taste for chamber music was perpetuated in the first half of the nineteenth century in four principal centres, but it largely failed to encourage a truly native quartet tradition. In Milan, Alessandro Rolla's (1757–1841) three quartets Op. 5 (published in 1807), like most Italian instrumental works of the period, followed Viennese Classical models. They comprise the customary four movements, but two of the three place the minuet second, rather than third, a pattern adopted later by Nicolò Paganini (1782–1840)

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in his string quartets.[15] Rolla's sonata-form first movements include some dramatic inflections but little true thematic development, while the slow movements are often intensely lyrical (though Op. 5 no. 2 is a theme and variations) and the finales are rondos, often incorporating technical challenges particularly for the first violinist. Such virtuoso demands are even more prevalent in his three *Quartetti Concertanti* Op. 2, published in 1823.

In Bologna, Felice Alessandro Radicati (1775–1820) was an influential champion of the cause, composing nine string quartets and numerous other chamber works which were disseminated by some of the most prestigious publishers of his time. After various tours and sojourns abroad, Giovanni Battista Polledro (1781–1853) settled in Turin from 1824 and, as *maestro di cappella* at the court, did much to foster chamber music in the city. Following the foundation in Florence (1830) of the Società Filarmonica (the first in Italy) to disseminate Classical (and especially instrumental) music, the initiative of the Italian music critic Abramo Basevi (1818–85) in establishing in that city a series of concerts called 'Mattinate Beethoveniane' (from 1859) with the objective of awakening Italians further to the German instrumental tradition led to the formation of the Società del Quartetto di Firenze (1861). The violinist/composer Ferdinando Giorgetti (1796–1867) was among this society's prime movers, modelling the instrumental style of his three string quartets (1851–6) on that of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven and earning for himself the nickname 'Tedescone'. The Società's success led to the rapid establishment of a network of such quartet societies over Italy, notably in Milan and Turin in the 1860s, Palermo in 1871, and Bologna in 1879.

By the time he was twenty-five years old, Antonio Bazzini (1818–97) had already forged a successful career as an itinerant virtuoso, performing in the most important musical centres of Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, Spain and the Netherlands. Following his return to Italy in 1864, he became active in promoting and composing for quartet societies in Italy, eventually settling in Milan. He released five quartets into the public domain between 1864 and 1893; an early work (Op. 7) in the genre remained unpublished. The celebrated double bass player and conductor Giovanni Bottesini (1821–89) also wrote chamber music in the intervals between concert tours abroad. From 1862 to 1865 he subscribed to the Società del Quartetto di Firenze and his output includes eleven string quartets. The three string quartets published by Girard as Opp. 2 in B♭, 3 in F♯ minor and 4 in D confirm his development of a more personal language, especially Op. 4, which won the second Concorso Basevi in Florence (1862).

Two of the most important non-operatic composers who contributed to the renascence of Italian instrumental music and Italian concert life in general were Giovanni Sgambati (1841–1914), who was based largely in Rome, and Giuseppe Martucci (1856–1909) who worked principally in Bologna

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and Naples. Martucci composed little of significance for string quartet, but Sgambati's rhapsodic String Quartet in C♯ minor gained some measure of international popularity in the 1880s.

Several composers who are better known for their ventures in opera also contributed to the quartet repertoire. Giovanni Pacini (1796–1867) was a principal player in the Italian operatic scene from *c.* 1820 to 1850; his instrumental music, however, dates from his final years and includes six quartets (1858–65), which reveal a mixture of Viennese classical influence and that of Italian predecessors such as Rossini. Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848) composed most of his eighteen or so string quartets for musical gatherings at the house of one Bertoli in Bergamo, where the German composer Simon Mayr often played the viola. Following Viennese structural models, including numerous monothematic finales in the manner of Haydn, they demonstrate remarkable assurance in the medium, even if their *Gebrauchsmusik* intentions have prevented them from taking hold in the repertory.

The efforts of most Italian composers in the genre were eclipsed by Giuseppe Verdi's (1813–1901) sole instrumental work, his String Quartet in E minor, written in March 1873 during a month of enforced leisure in Naples. Verdi himself attached so little importance to the work that for some time he would not allow it either to be heard in public or to be published – it was eventually premiered by Camillo Sivori's French ensemble (Sivori, Marsick, Viardot and Delsart) in 1876. A unique work in his output, it especially demonstrates Verdi's easy and informal mastery of the resources of counterpoint. Recapitulation and development are condensed into one in the opening, sonata-form Allegro (i.e. such development as there is finds its way into the transitional part of the recapitulation), with its expansive first theme and chromatically harmonised second theme (G major). The charming Andantino might almost represent a *scena* of some opera, while the brilliant scherzo (E minor) incorporates a startling modulation to A♭ (really G♯) major in its middle section. The finale, as Verdi indicates in his movement heading, is a joke-fugue (Scherzo Fuga). It may well be considered as a preliminary study for the celebrated choral fugue which crowns his last opera, *Falstaff*, to the words, 'Tutto il mondo e burla' ('All the world's a joke'). Its mood is similar, though its theme is different; but the lively result is a fully worked-out and quite 'learned' fugue on a skittish, six-bar (*leggierissimo*) subject.

Verdi's quartet had few Italian successors in the nineteenth century. Ferruccio Busoni's (1866–1924) flirtations with the genre are early products from the late 1870s and 1880s composed under the influence of Brahms. They include two full-scale quartets (in C minor and F minor; both 1876) without opus numbers, some individual minuets and other movements for the medium, a Quartet in C Op. 19 (*c.* 1883) and the best of the bunch, the

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Quartet in D minor Op. 26 (*c.* 1887). In his correspondence Busoni considered Op. 26 his 'most significant work so far'. He described to Melanie Mayer (the daughter of his composition teacher in Graz, Wilhelm Mayer-Rémy), the grand, almost symphonic scale of the first movement, the 'deeply felt and extremely carefully worked out' Adagio, the 'wild and demonic Scherzo' and the humorous theme of the boisterous finale, which 'finally combines the theme with that of the first movement, after which a spirited coda makes for a great and effective climax'.[16] Busoni later admitted (1909) having plans to write a quartet in one movement, 'which should be *my* masterwork and really stir up emotions'.[17] Regrettably, such plans were never brought to fruition.

Giacomo Puccini's (1858–1924) string quartet music, with the exception of some student exercises, dates, like Busoni's, mostly from the early 1880s (before the operas for which he is best remembered) and remained mostly unpublished. His best-known work for the medium, *Crisantemi*, was written on the death of a friend, Prince Amadeo, Duke of Savoy, in 1890. The restrained, rhapsodic grieving of the music reflects the strong melancholic vein in the composer himself. Puccini connoisseurs may recognise the work's two principal themes, which reappear in *Manon Lescaut* – in Des Grieux's address to Manon in prison ('Ah! Manon disperato') and at the opening of the final act.

Finally, Ottorino Respighi's (1879–1936) four completed quartets deserve passing mention, particularly No. 4, 'Quartetto Dorico' (1924), a through-composed, thoroughly unified work in which modal material is skilfully utilised. 'Dorico' refers to the Dorian scale on which the principal theme of the work is founded. This theme pervades the quartet in various guises and transformations, ensuring its unity and cohesion. It plays a particularly important role in the finale, a complex passacaglia in 7/4 metre, either in *quasi recitativo* or in the final climactic section, in which its very last appearance is punctuated by rapid ascending scales.

Great Britain

British contributions to the quartet repertory were somewhat spasmodic during the nineteenth century; however, the chamber music output of John Lodge Ellerton (1801–73)[18] was unusually large for his time. Closely modelled on the work of the Viennese Classical masters but written in a style tinged with Romanticism, Ellerton's fifty string quartets composed between the 1840s and 1860s represent a significant (if not especially original) corpus of works in the genre. The contributions of others were less substantial. Arguably the most distinguished English composer of the Romantic period, Sir William Sterndale Bennett (1816–75), managed only one work in the

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genre, while the only string quartet (in C minor) of Sir Frederic Cowen (1852–1935), who studied in Leipzig from 1865, was premiered at the Conservatoire there in 1866. Between *c.* 1834 and 1878 Sir George Macfarren (1813–87) composed five string quartets whose popularity was also shortlived.

Later in the century other British 'knights' Sir Hubert Parry (1848–1918), Sir John McEwen (1868–1948), Sir Alexander Mackenzie (1847–1935) and Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) dominated British composition, although their contributions to the chamber sphere were variable. Parry composed two Mendelssohnian quartets (1867, 1868) as a student at Oxford University and he added Brahms and Wagner to his list of influences in No. 3, completed a decade later; however, he became celebrated more for his choral works than his chamber music. McEwen, on the other hand, was a prolific composer of string quartets, contributing nineteen finely wrought works. Some of them synthesize Romantic elements with Scottish folk idioms (as in No. 15 'A Little Quartet "in modo scotico"') and sometimes even French folk influences (as in No. 6 'Biscay' and No. 16 'Provencale'); but perhaps the best known are No. 9 ('Threnody'), a highly emotional, through-composed work written during the strife of war, and No. 10 ('The Jocund Dance'), which is essentially a suite of dance tunes.

The hallmarks of Mendelssohn and Brahms are also especially strong in Mackenzie's only string quartet and Stanford's eight quartets, these latter tinged also with his Irish folklore heritage; however, Stanford's influence as a teacher is probably more noteworthy than his works in the genre, since so many of his pupils contributed significantly to the revival of a native chamber music in Britain, among them Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912), Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958), Thomas Dunhill (1877–1946),[19] Frank Bridge (1879–1941), Herbert Howells (1892–1983), John Ireland (1879–1962),[20] Eugene Goossens (1893–1962) and, briefly, Sir Arthur Bliss (1891–1975).[21] Coleridge-Taylor's *Five Fantasiestücke* (1895) and his unpublished String Quartet in D minor Op. 13 date from his student days at the Royal College of Music under Stanford, where he gained an assured technique and added Stanford's Brahmsian influence to his own enthusiasm for Dvóřak's work.

Irish-born Charles Wood (1866–1926) was brought up in the same London 'stable' but went on to Cambridge University, became known primarily as a composer of Anglican church music and received many prestigious awards for his contribution to British musical life. His six completed string quartets, edited by Edward J. Dent and published posthumously in 1929, rarely escape the influence of Parry and Stanford. But many of their themes are derived from, or inspired by, Irish folk music – the A minor Quartet (1911) is a notable case in point. Wood also wrote some *Variations on an Irish Folk Song* (?1917) and numerous other movements for the medium.

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In Wales, the music of another Parry – the Merthyr-born disciple of Sterndale Bennett, Joseph Parry (1841–1903) – enjoyed great popularity.[22] The three movements of his String Quartet demonstrate his rather cosy operatic manner imbued with an earnest academicism. Its opening sonata-form Allegro is preceded by a severe slow introduction in 'the old style'. The slow movement displays Parry's Italianate lyricism to the full and the work ends with a fugue whose material is resourcefully manipulated, the main idea itself being subjected to stretto, inversion, augmentation and diminution.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, string quartet composition was further encouraged in Britain by the prize competitions instituted in 1905 by Walter Willson Cobbett, a successful businessman and enthusiastic amateur musician.[23] Cobbett favoured the 'Phantasy' – a through-composed, single-movement piece generally comprising sections varying in tempo and character – and a large number of Phantasie Quartets and Quintets for various instrumental combinations were written as a result of this stimulus. Phantasie String Quartets by Bridge (in F minor, 1905), William Hurlestone (1876–1906; 1906) and Howells (Op. 25; 1916–17) are notable examples of the genre.

Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934) came to the string quartet late in life; earlier attempts to contribute to the genre never bore fruit. His diary records him writing 'E minor stuff' in April 1918 and it is significant that of the four works dating from this period, three are in that key, including his String Quartet Op. 83. The Quartet is a much less grandiose affair than its immediate successor, the Piano Quintet Op. 84: in mood it foreshadows some of those uneasily elegiac qualities which make the Cello Concerto so memorable. The restless, sonata-form first movement adopts the compound (12/8) metre which had proved so successful a channel for the vigorous flow and nobility of thought of the first movement of his Second Symphony. The contrasting, tranquil slow movement (Piacevole) has an almost *Wand of Youth*-like charm. It is light music, though serious thoughts are not excluded, and the design has a breadth for which the very simple song-like material proves surprisingly apt. The finale has a rhetorical, even extrovert air in its early stages, though some of its more chromatic episodes may seem too dependent upon well-tried Elgarian mannerisms. It is a passionate movement with many other satisfying features, nevertheless, and the spirit of Falstaff conquers that of Gerontius to ensure a lively close.

America

The seeds for the growth of chamber music in the Americas were scattered towards the end of the eighteenth century in Pennsylvania and the Carolinas,

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where the German-speaking communities of Moravians and other central Europeans began to develop an active chamber music culture. But the symphony was the predominant instrumental genre, and it was only after the establishment of societies such as the Harvard Musical Association (1844), the Mason–Thomas concerts in New York (1855) and the Briggs House Concerts in Chicago (1860) and the formation of professional groups such as the Mendelssohn Quintette Club in Boston (1849) that the chamber music repertory was disseminated to a wider audience.

European Classical fare dominated the programmes, but string quartets by native Americans were gradually introduced, fired by a number of short-lived groups with varying degrees of nationalistic purpose.[24] Prominent among these groups were William H. Fry (1813–64) and George Frederick Bristow (1825–98), each of whom contributed to the cause two quartets (1849) of essentially Classical proportions and style.[25] Two quartets by Charles C. Perkins are also significant landmarks in that they were among the first American music published by the Leipzig firm Breitkopf & Härtel (1854 and 1855).

Musical studies in Germany became the vogue for budding American composers; perhaps not surprisingly, the works of Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms provided the models for the likes of John Knowles Paine's (1839–1906) String Quartet in D Op. 5, written as a student exercise in Berlin in the late 1850s and published posthumously in 1940, and Horatio Parker's (1863–1919) Quartet in F Op. 11 (1885), composed while he was a student in Munich. George Chadwick (1854–1931), who undertook a somewhat belated systematic musical education at the Leipzig Conservatoire from 1878, benefited from the concert opportunities there which spawned the first two (in G minor and C) of his five string quartets. His return to Boston (1880) and his association with the first renowned American string quartet, the Kneisel Quartet (formed in 1885), led to the composition of his Third (*c.* 1885) and Fourth Quartets (1896). The latter was directly inspired by Dvořák's F major Quartet Op. 96 ('American'), which had received its first performance by the Kneisel Quartet in Boston early in 1894 and provided a major stimulus for native American interest in the genre. It demonstrates Chadwick's attempts to liberate his musical expression from German influences and incorporate, as in the second and third movements, 'a free imitation of and a refinement upon the idiom of negro music'.[26] Such trends are further evident in his Fifth Quartet in D minor (1898), written for the Adamowski Quartet, and in later American works such as Daniel Gregory Mason's (1873–1953) *String Quartet on Negro Themes* Op. 19 (1918–19), with its use of spirituals and some occasional Debussian impressionism. Chadwick's fellow Bostonian Arthur Foote (1853–1937) also wrote quartets after Dvořák's American sojourn, following his Op. 4 in G minor (1883) with Op. 32 in E (1893) and a Third

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Quartet in D (1907–11); but these were essentially American works written in a predominantly Austro-German language.

The early twentieth century brought with it a wider variety of styles for American music. French currents, detectable in some of the quartets of, for example, Frédéric Ritter (1824–91), are also evident in the work of Charles Martin Loeffler (1861–1935; 1889), John Alden Carpenter (1876–1951; 1927) and Edward Burlingame Hill (1872–1960; 1935). Furthermore, composers such as Frederick Converse (1871–1940; three quartets, 1896–1935), Henry Gilbert (1868–1928; Quartet, 1920) and Arthur Farwell (1872–1952; String Quartet 'The Hako', 1922) introduced elements of American folk music in an effort to cultivate an independent American style.

With similar aims, Charles Ives (1874–1954), while studying with Parker at Yale, based his First Quartet (1896) on American hymn tunes. His unorthodox approach, which also involved a fugal first movement later reused in his Fourth Symphony, heralded a corpus of works in the medium by American composers as diverse as Walter Piston (1894–1976), Henry Cowell (1897–1965), Quincy Porter (1897–1966), Roy Harris (1898–1979), Virgil Thomson (1896–1989) and Ruth Crawford Seeger (1901–53). The most significant of these are discussed further in Chapter 14.

Other countries

Few other pockets of quartet activity not covered elsewhere in this volume are worthy of note. The long-standing traditions of *Hausmusik* in Switzerland yielded little home-grown compositional talent of significance in the nineteenth century, while the influence of German composers was predominant in most other European countries. The Netherlander Johannes Verhulst (1816–91), for example, trod a fairly lonely path as a composer of three string quartets, but these works date from his sojourn in Leipzig. Schumann, his close friend during that period, particularly praised the Adagio of Verhulst's Quartet in A♭ major Op. 6 no. 2 (1840); Verhulst's Third Quartet Op. 21 (1845), however, received a mixed reception, its ideas 'being traceable not only to Mendelssohn and Schumann, but also, in the adagio, to Beethoven (Septet)'.[27]

The conservatoire in Madrid was the focal point for string quartet concerts in nineteenth-century Spain. But one of the most significant Spanish composers in the genre was Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga (1806–26), who studied at the Paris Conservatoire under Baillot and Fétis. His three quartets (in D minor, A major and E♭ major), composed at the age of sixteen, make one wonder what his stature might have been in the medium had he lived longer. Fétis commended them for their originality and elegance.[28]

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Based firmly on the Classical style, they incorporate splashes of native Spanish colour, especially the D minor Quartet, which has a Spanish *jota* as its trio. Among other nineteenth-century Spanish composers who contributed to the repertory were Federico Olmeda (1865–1909), Felipe Pedrell (1841–1922), Ruperto Chapí (1851–1909) and Tomás Bretón (1850–1923).

With the cultivation and development of the genre throughout Europe and America during the nineteenth century, string quartet composition, though still focused on Austro-German traditions, was ready to enter a new era, one in which the scope, tastes, expectations and popularity of the medium would undergo much more radical and dramatic transformation.

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