TOCCATA CLASSICS

Giuseppe CAMBINI

CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME ONE: STRING QUINTETS I

NO. 13 IN D MINOR
NO. 16 IN C MAJOR
NO. 47 IN D MAJOR

Amadeus Chamber Musicians

FIRST RECORDINGS

GIUSEPPE CAMBINI: CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME ONE – THREE STRING QUINTETS

by William Melton

Two centuries after his existence, verifiable facts about the composer Giuseppe Maria Cambini remain few. 'There is no reliable information regarding Cambini's early life and his musical training',[1] a recent encyclopædia entry began, and chroniclers, including the notable François-Joseph Fétis and Cambini himself, have left posterity a life-story that is dubious and sometimes fabulous. He may have been born at Livorno about 13 February 1746, and is said to have studied with a certain Signore Polli (still unidentified), as well as with Padre Martini and even Joseph Haydn (both unsubstantiated). 'In my youth', Cambini noted in 1804,

> I spent six blissful months immersed in such study and such pleasure. Three great masters – [Francesco] Manfredi, the finest violinist in the whole of Italy when it came to orchestral and quartet playing; [Pietro] Nardini, who had become famous as a virtuoso through the perfection of his technique; and [Luigi] Boccherini, whose merits are well known – did me the honour of accepting me as a violist into their circle. We studied, in the manner described, quartets by Haydn (those which now make up sets of Opp. 9, 17 and 21) and by Boccherini, which he was composing at the time and which are still so much enjoyed today; and I may say myself that, with what we had rehearsed in this way, we cast a spell on those for whom we played.[2]

Although Manfredi may have been a presence in Cambini's life, there is no evidence of a connection with either Nardini or Boccherini. Stretching credibility even more, Fétis related that Cambini was captured by Barbary pirates after a stay at Naples

[1] Jean Gribenski, 'Cambini, Giuseppe Maria', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, Personenteil, Vol. 4, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2000, column 9.

[2] Giuseppe Cambini, 'Ausführung der Instrumentalquartetten', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Vol. 6, No. 47, 22 August 1804, column 783.

in 1766, but was ransomed by a wealthy Venetian, a tale for which there is no existing foundation.[3] Eschewing the fanciful in favour of the reliably documented, it seems that Cambini made his first appearance at Paris in the early 1770s and was a soloist in a *symphonie concertante* at a Concert Spirituel on 20 May 1773. The 22-year-old Wolfgang Mozart wrote to his father, Leopold, about a later concert in the same series, where Wolfgang's own *Sinfonia Concertante* went unperformed:

> [The oboist Friedrich] Ramm and [horn player Giovanni] Punto came up to me all worked up and asked why my Sinfonie Concerto was not on the programme? — I don't know. It's the first I've heard about it. I know nothing about it. Ramm was absolutely furious; he railed against [impresario Joseph] Le Gros in French right in the Music Room, saying that it was a dirty trick, etc. What bothers me the most in all this is that Le Gros never said a word to me, I alone was to be kept in the dark — if he had given me some kind of excuse, such as the time was too short, or something of the sort, but nothing at all — I do think, however, the reason behind it all was Cambini, an Italian maestro here, because when we first met at the house of Le Gros, I inadvertently put him down. He has composed quartetti, and I heard one of them in Mannheim; they are quite pretty, and I praised them to him; then I proceeded to play the beginning of the one I had heard, but then Ritter, Ramm and Punto insisted that I continue playing and invent something for the part of the piece I couldn't remember. So that's what I did, and Cambini was quite beside himself; he couldn't contain himself and blurted out: *questa è una gran Testa!* Well, I guess he didn't appreciate what I did.[4]

Remaining in Paris, Cambini made the acquaintance of the composer François-Joseph Gossec, was engaged as conductor at the Théâtre des Beaujolais and later the Théâtre Louvois, and was employed by the Committee of Public Instruction to compose hymns to the Revolution. He proved a very fertile producer of musical scores, and

[3] François-Joseph Fétis, 'Cambini (Jean-Joseph)', *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, Vol. 2, Didot Frères, Fils et Cie, Paris, 1867, pp. 162–64.

[4] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Letter to Leopold Mozart, 1 May 1778, from: *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life: Selected Letters*, transl. Robert Spaethling, Faber, London, 2000, p. 152. Spaethling comments of the phrase 'questa è una gran Testa!' that the expression could mean either 'What a great mind!' or 'What a swollen head!'.

highlights of his *œuvre* include at least fourteen operas, four oratorios, 82 *symphonies concertantes* and chamber music that included over 100 string quartets. His published instrumental creations alone tallied nearly 600, and Cambini's remarkable production prompted music historians from Ernst Ludwig Gerber (1812) to Daniel Heartz (2003) to voice doubts about the quality of such a profusion of rapidly composed works.

By the mid-1790s, Cambini's career began to fade. Rumours about his latter life – that he had retired to Holland about 1810, was admitted as a pauper to the Bicêtre hospice, or died by suicide – remain unauthenticated. *The New Grove* lists the place and date of Cambini's death as Paris and '?1825',[5] while *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* offers the date '29 December, 1825 (?)'[6] but cites *The Grove Dictionary* of 1954 as the source. What emerges as genuine out of much that is doubtful is Cambini's persistent devotion to chamber music. He wrote in 1804:

> Music may not always be intended to stir up or intoxicate the emotions, but it should command our attention, thereby distracting us from the cares and sorrows of this mundane life. Instrumental music, without the support of poetry, serves, in my view, primarily this latter purpose. But if it is to achieve this, it must be well composed and well performed. Haydn's symphonies, as we present them here, demonstrate in practice what I mean by those two requirements: no one listens to them without being captivated to the extent that they forget their worries. The quartet, quintet and the like can and should achieve the same, whilst retaining the advantage that we can listen to them even when we are not in a large hall and do not have fifty musicians at our disposal.[7]

Criticism of Cambini – that his melodic material rarely exceeds the amiable or his harmonic vocabulary remains elementary – misses the pockets of richness with which he imbues his scores. His skilful employment of diatonic and chromatic dissonances and his deftness in creating rhythmic turbulence that escalates momentum are certainly details worthy of attention. *The New Grove* concluded that his creations

[5] Chappell White, Jean Gribenski and Amzie D. Parcell, 'Cambini, Giuseppe Maria (Gioacchino)', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, Vol. 4, Macmillan, London, 2001, p. 858.

[6] Gribenski, *loc. cit.*, column 9.

[7] Cambini, *loc. cit.*, column 781.

> show facility far above the average and a degree of craftsmanship adequate to his purpose and imagination. He never tried to do more than please his audience, and in this he was justly successful. He was the *galant* Parisian composer *par excellence* – facile, charming, brilliant and very occasionally novel.[8]

It had been in 1794 that the scientist and manufacturer Armand Séguin had first engaged Cambini for his private concerts. After discovering a more rapid and cost-effective method of tanning leather, Séguin earned considerable wealth supplying his product to the French military. It was for Séguin's concerts that Cambini composed 110 string quintets for two violins, viola and two cellos, of which 84 survive in manuscript in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (and were the basis of the first editions published by the Amadeus Verlag of Winterthur used in this recording).

The String Quintet No. 47 in D major begins its first movement *Allegro maestoso* 1 in common time with three unison falling sixths, *forte*, followed by dotted crotchets. This boldly etched opening motto, the singular principal theme of this sonata-form structure, is then shepherded by descending scales of semiquavers to more contemplative material in the tonic D major, *piano dolce*. Pleasing quaver lines in the first violin and semiquaver figures in the first cello precede the introduction of the secondary subject in the dominant A major, a singing, descending *legato* theme in violin thirds, *mf dolce*. Three bars of repeated quavers on low A in the second cello (against the opening motto in first violin and first cello) and continuous semiquavers in the second violin see the exposition to its close and repeat. The development begins *forte* with the opening motto pitted against semiquaver turbulence in the accompaniment. There is also a departure from the previous simple harmonic scheme, as the submediant B minor prevails. Arpeggiated quaver triplets in the first violin are given largely cadential support, and the principal theme is imitated in alternating exchanges in the cellos. With the arrival of recapitulation in D major, the principal cello theme is quickened by semiquaver runs in the upper strings. The secondary subject reappears in D major and the movement ends in a *forte* statement that is very like the opening eight bars of the movement, but

[8] White, *loc. cit.*, p. 859.

with added quaver triplets in the lower strings that propel the violin motto into the final cadence.

The solemn *Adagio* [2] that follows is in ternary or song form, with a languid *piano* opening theme in $\frac{3}{4}$ and A major. After A is repeated, the B section surprises with *forte* in F sharp minor, though the serene mood is soon regained in B minor and D major, *piano dolce*. The deliberate melodic lines subdivide smoothly into semiquavers and semiquaver sextuplets as the key moves through A, B and E major. The A major return of the opening theme gains additional embellishment as it runs its *legato* course to the final *pp* cadence.

The finale [3] is *Presto ma non tanto*, and begins with a brisk hunting rondo theme in $\frac{2}{4}$ and D major. The mixture of rondo with sonata form unfolds ABABCA, with A invariably in D major and episode B in the dominant A major. Episode C is developmental, starting in the submediant B minor, but fluid thereafter. The last return of A in D major ends with a shortened iteration of the same theme before four bars of furious semiquaver activity lead to the cadential close.

The String Quintet No. 13 in D minor begins with an *Allegro maestoso* [4] in common time. The sinuous eight-bar principal theme is played in unison across the quintet, and subsequent contrapuntal entrances gradually augment the harmonic depth. D minor yields to the A minor dominant and a secondary subject that features the violins trading lively virtuosic phrases. A *forte* semiquaver motto, again played in unison, signals a repeat of the exposition, and the development begins in G minor, *forte*, with all voices invoking the principal theme in fugal imitation. The tonality shifts through E flat major and C minor until a highly chromatic, unsettled section ends with the recapitulation. Here the principal theme is restated in D minor, and the secondary subject also appears in D minor before a codetta combines the themes with quaver triplet scales and arpeggios. The *forte* semiquaver motto is heard for a last time, and *piano* and *pp* cadences see the movement to its ending.

The second movement is designated *Pastorella. Andante comodo* [5]. The *piano dolce* opening theme, in D major in first violin and then first cello, leans heavily on the lilting $\frac{6}{8}$ metre. The B section, also marked *piano dolce*, has the feeling of a variation

with its continuous semiquavers, but the typical harmonic scheme is undermined by its extremely fluid tonality. The return of the opening D major, yet again styled *piano dolce*, conflates eight bars of swaying quaver motion with four bars of faster semiquavers before finishing on repeated D major chords.

The third-movement rondo in D minor ($\frac{6}{8}$) is marked *Allegretto moderato semplice e vago* [6], the end of which might be translated 'naturally and uncertainly', adverbs meant to inform the mournful first violin threnody. The B episode offers an amiable first cello solo in A major, after which a section of A-related material follows, and the rapidly changing tonalities eventually return to D minor tonic roots. The following C episode is led by the viola in virtuosic and jovial fashion in the parallel key of D major before a last return of A, where the mournful threnody is punctuated by two bustling *forte* outbursts on the way to the final D minor cadence.

Cambini's String Quintet No. 16 in C major begins *Grave – Allegro* [7] in $\frac{3}{4}$ with a triadic motto, *piano dolce,* in unison and afterwards in a harmonised version, with C major soon obscured by increasing accidentals. The principal theme, an accelerated version of the opening motto, appears at *Allegro*, later to be modified with faster note-values and displaced *sforzando* accents. The second subject is a calmly descending *legato* line in the dominant G major, and this key sees the exposition to its close. After a repeat from the beginning of the *Allegro* a short development begins with the opening two bars of the principal theme which moves through A minor and B minor. A 22-bar *legato* statement in the first violin then wanders harmonically from major keys D and B flat to minor keys C and D before touching on a G major seventh chord in first inversion that acts as dominant to the recapitulation of the principal theme in the tonic C major. The *dolce* second subject reappears transposed to C major, and quaver triplets are added to quicken the feeling of pace. The principal theme returns and the opening motto appears *ff* in unison before a full bar of dominant G major seventh harmony precedes the closing C major chord, *staccato forte*.

The second movement that follows is *Andante moderato* [8] in $\frac{2}{4}$ metre. The opening theme (A) with a *staccato* start is played in unison with the exception of a short counter-theme in the viola. C minor is established as the tonic key as harmonic depth is added,

and the theme continues in the cellos with counter-melodies in the treble. B is set in the parallel C major and begins *legato dolce* in the cellos before the A theme and C minor return in semiquaver triplet ornamentation. A codetta to this hybrid movement, which displays both song form (ABA) and the variation principle, makes brief references to A (*forte*) and B (*piano*) before a last dominant G major seventh to A minor cadence, *forte*.

Similarly, the *Allegretto con spirito* 9 finale combines aspects of both rondo and sonata forms. The opening in C major presents a brisk, principal theme in $\frac{2}{4}$ (which might also be a quintessential rondo theme), and the delicate secondary subject (or B) is unveiled *dolce* in the second violin in the dominant G major. After a repeat, a development follows (C in the rondo scheme, but developmental) which begins with the principal theme in G major but quickly employs accidentals to create a climate of tonal instability. The brevity of the development allows only a limited amount of harmonic disquiet, and soon a handily reached G major seventh chord ushers in the recapitulation in C major. The principal theme (or A) is duly followed by the second subject (B), now also in C major, before a goodly amount of cadential bustle precedes imitation of the beginning principal motto (A). Finally, two bars of *forte* plunging semiquaver scales land at the final, *marcato*-accented C major chord.

William Melton is the author of Humperdinck: A Life of the Composer of *Hänsel und Gretel (Toccata Press, London, 2020) and* The Wagner Tuba: A History *(edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008) and was a contributor to* The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia *(2013). He undertook postgraduate studies in music history at the University of California at Los Angeles, studying horn with Alfred Brain's protégé Sinclair Lott (First Horn of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, 1949–73), before embarking on a four-decade career as a horn-player with the Sinfonie Orchester Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). Further writings include articles on lesser-known Romantics including Friedrich Gernsheim, Jean Louis Nicodé and Friedrich Klose, and he has researched and edited the scores of the 'Forgotten Romantics' series for the publisher edition ebenos.*

The **Amadeus Chamber Musicians** came together as an ensemble for the first time in 2024, taking the name 'Amadeus' as their inspiration. Bernhard Päuler, the founder of the publishing house Amadeus (in Winterthur, Swizterland), spent a lifetime of incredible, painstaking effort acquiring a unique collection of chamber-music scores and publishing many works by little-known composers in meticulously prepared editions. It is tempting to ascribe world-heritage status to this collection: it comprises chamber-music works in a variety of genres deserving long-overdue publication. The repertoire requires ensembles in a variety of line-ups; performers are drawn principally from the 'Friends of Amadeus Publishers'.

The violinist **Dmitry Daniel Askerov** is best known for his recordings of virtuoso repertoire such as Paganini's 'God Save the King', Ernst's 'Last Rose of Summer' and the 24th *Caprice* by Paganini. He also writes his own virtuoso cadenzas and variations on well-known themes such as the Swiss national anthem.

He has been able to enjoy many inspiring moments in the course of his musical career. He has complemented his violin-playing by studying contemporary music, the Baroque violin and the viola. His mentors have included Zakhar Bron, Ivry Gitlis, Ilya Gringolts, Ida Haendel, John Holloway and Leonidas Kavakos, and he is a passionate teacher himself. For some years he organised his own music festival in Florida, and he has assisted Gavriel Lipkind in his master-classes. He plays a 2024 violin by Yair Hod Fainas.

Jenny Joelson, viola, grew up in Winterthur, where she began learning violin and viola. She studied in Zurich and Salzburg with Wendy Enderle, Michel Rouilly and Thomas Riebl. She also received valuable input from Hariolf Schlichtig, Jean Sulem and Barbara Westphal. She played in a number of youth orchestras and was leader of the Swiss Youth Symphony Orchestra and of the LGT Young Soloists, with whom she also appeared as soloist in Asia and Europe. She is interested in Baroque music and plays Baroque viola and the viola da spalla, which she learnt with Sigiswald Kuijken. She plays as an extra with the Basle Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonia Zurich. Her viola, which is attributed to Felix Guadagnini, is on loan from a private collection.

Ísak Ríkharðsson, born in Reykjavík, studied at the Zurich University of the Arts in the class of Rudolf Koelman. He is an avid chamber musician as well as having performed as a soloist with orchestras in Georgia, Germany, Iceland and Switzerland. He is active on the classical-music scene in and around Zurich and has played with Collegium Novum Zürich, Basel Sinfonietta,

Sinfonieorchester Liechtenstein and Musikkollegium Winterthur, as well as Norbotten NEO in Sweden, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and the Reykjavík Chamber Orchestra. He is also a guest player in the Ever Present Orchestra, which specialises in performing the works of Alvin Lucier, a founder of Elja Ensemble and, since 2023, a member of Ensemble TaG Winterthur.

Luzi (Luzius) **Dubs** was born in 1951 in Winterthur, where he grew up. He began to learn the cello when he was seven, first with Hans Thomann, then from 1964 with the legendary Antonio Tusa; later he received input from Stephan Goerner of the Carmina Quartet and, especially in chamber music, from Ronny Spiegel and Dmitry Askerov.

On completing his studies in medicine in 1977, he trained as a specialist in orthopaedic surgery, and then worked in his own practice from 1985 to 2017. For all that time, however, he remained active in domestic music-making, either with his father or amongst friends. Through decades of friendship with Bernhard Päuler and Yvonne Mörgeli of the Amadeus publishing house, he came into contact with Päuler's music collection. As a member of the 'Friends of Amadeus Publishers', he has jointly promoted unknown or neglected pieces of chamber music.

Luzi Dubs is an advocate of the 'Pro-Am' concept, which aims to bring together committed amateurs and professional musicians for collaborative projects.

Since 2008 he has played a Viennese instrument of 1798 by Andreas Carolus Leeb.

Johannes Herzog began his cello studies at the age of five. He participated in the Thurgau programme for gifted young musicians and undertook preparatory studies at the Winterthur Conservatoire under Emanuel Rütsche. He completed his Bachelor's and Master's degrees under Martina Schucan at the Zurich University of the Arts, graduating with distinction in the summer of 2019. He gained further musical insight through master-classes with artists such as Roel Dieltiens, Christian Poltéra, Raphael Wallfisch and Martin Zeller.

He is a co-founder of the string collective Camerata Aperta and serves as principal cellist for both the Musikkollegium Schaffhausen Chamber Orchestra and the Sinfonisches Orchester Schweiz. In addition to modern repertoire, he devotes himself to historically informed performance practice and chamber music. His regular ensembles focus on the Classical string quartet (Quartett Balerna) and the piano trio (Trio Petrichor and Trio Enna).

Amadeus Chamber Musicians: left to right, Luzi Dubs, Ísak Ríkharðsson, Jenny Joelson, Dmitriy Askerov, Johannes Herzog

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Toccata Classics, 16 Dalkeith Court, Vincent Street, London SW1P 4HH, UK
Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020 E-mail: info@toccataclassics.com

GIUSEPPE CAMBINI Chamber Music, Volume One: String Quintets I

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	TT **57:46**

FIRST RECORDING

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Dmitriy Daniel Askerov, violin
Ísak Ríkharðsson, violin
Jenny Joelson, viola
Luzi Dubs, cello I 1–3 7–9, cello II 4–6
Johannes Herzog, cello I 4–6, cello II 1–3 7–9