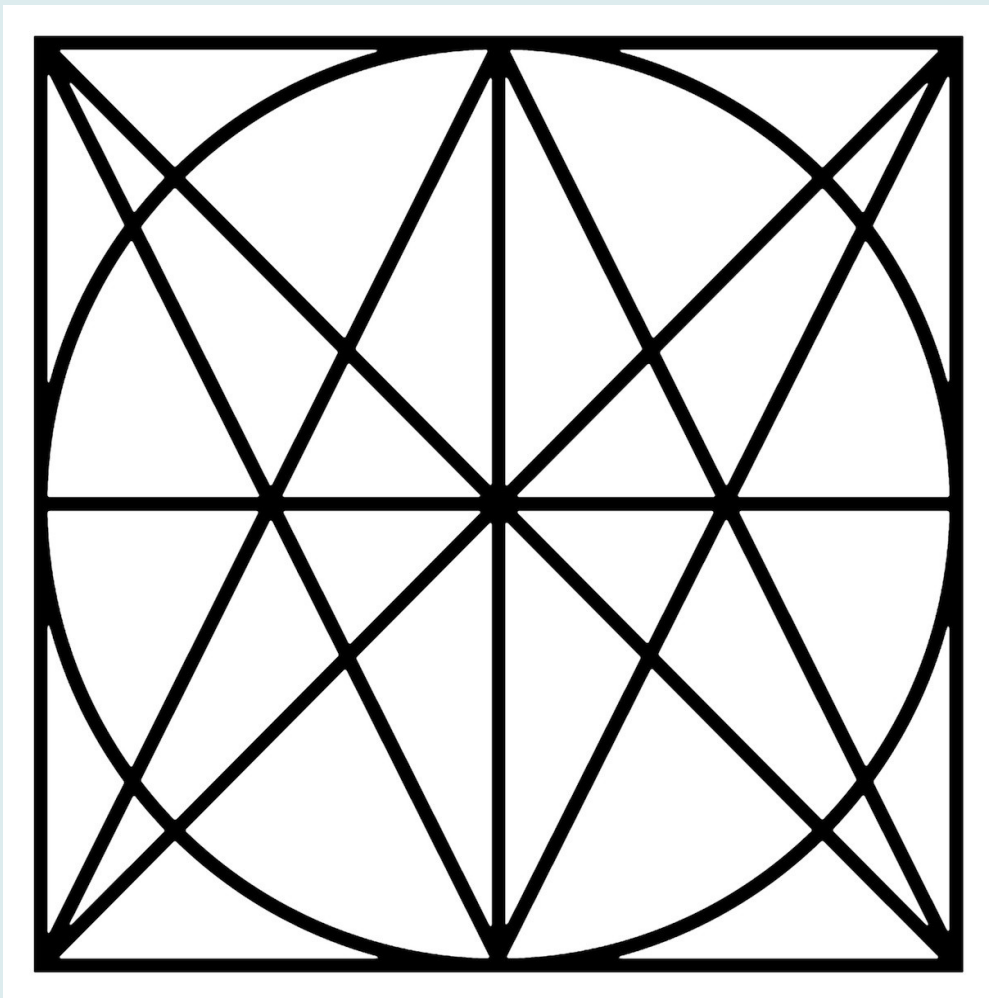


SECOND EDITION

# A Guide to Forgotten String Quartets

Exploring unjustly neglected masterpieces



An eBook by Lyle Chan

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a mysterious organization dedicated to  
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you will enjoy visiting  
**[www.forgottenstringquartets.com](http://www.forgottenstringquartets.com)**

## Introduction to the Second Edition

As we stated in our First Edition, *A Guide to Forgotten String Quartets* was intended to take advantage of the swiftness of e-publishing and be revised quickly towards a second and subsequent editions.

This Second Edition is the result of the very encouraging emails we've received. Most of your emails have been simply about how much you've enjoyed the coverage and found the eBook useful. Some of you have also brought additional works to our attention, many of which we've included here.

This new edition adds another 10 quartets which amounts to nearly 3 hours of listening time.

We've chosen a balance of little-known works by famous composers like Samuel Barber, Kurt Weill, Franz Liszt, Beethoven (yes, even this titan of a composer has neglected works) as well as composers whose entire output, not just their string quartets, is largely forgotten, such as Chevalier de Saint-George and Malipiero.

And one of the new quartets is in fact a multicomposer suite of 16 movements from Russia called *Les Vendredis*, certainly one of the most interesting discoveries we've made.

Since the First Edition, the internet app called Spotify has been widely adopted by the classical music community and so we have begun to include Spotify listening links – we'll start with new works being added to this Second Edition, and retrospectively add links for the rest.

We're also launching a new feature, which is a playlist on Spotify. Our first playlist is simply the set of new quartets being added to this Second Edition. We welcome your feedback, and if you like it, we will make additional playlists based on similar compositional styles or we might even simulate concert programming.

Here's the link to our Spotify playlist [FORGOTTEN STRING QUARTETS-1](#).

For your convenience, the new works in this Second Edition have "NEW TO THIS EDITION" next to the composer's name.

For even more convenience, the following is a list of hyperlinks that take you straight to the new entries.

## List of additions to this Second Edition

- [Saint-George: String Quartet, Op. 14 No. 4](#)
- [Beethoven: String Quartet in F, Hess 34](#)
- [Liszt: Angelus!](#)
- [Barber: String Quartet, Op. 11 \(1937 version\)](#)
- [Barber: Serenade for string quartet](#)
- [Roussel: String Quartet](#)
- [Les Vendredis](#)
- [Weill: String Quartet](#)
- [Malipiero: String Quartet No. 1](#)
- [Skalkottas: String Quartet No. 4](#)

## **Introduction to the First Edition**

This eBook was written to address the following situation: there are many, many more great works than the ones you encounter in regular concerts.

Classical music concerts tend to be repetitive. This is true across all genres: symphonic concerts, opera, chamber music.

Of course it's essential that we get to hear the famous masterpieces often: not only do we discover more about their qualities with each encounter, but the great performers are able to interpret them in such diverse and revelatory ways.

But what about the masterpieces that don't get heard? As this book shows, there are masterpieces neglected to the point where people have forgotten they even exist.

### **Why the string quartet?**

This is a fascinating genre. Ever since Beethoven wrote his late quartets, the quartet genre has become irreversibly interpreted as the repository of a composer's best, most important, truest or most personal thoughts.

The only major composer since Beethoven not to have written a string quartet is Wagner.

If you're curious about what other compositions there are for this inexhaustible genre, this book is for you.

A book like this is necessarily subjective. The first rule we made up is that a composition can only qualify as forgotten if it's been written before the year 2000. Otherwise, it hasn't been around long enough to be forgotten.

Then there's the big question of, how forgotten must a work be to qualify for inclusion in this book?

The works we've decided to omit are telling. Some would argue that the mighty quartet in D by César Franck is forgotten because it is virtually never heard in concert. But since there are so many recordings of it, this work just doesn't qualify.

You could say the same for the Elgar quartet or the Britten quartets.

Then there are those works which are never heard in concert and not often recorded. But they're very famous. A prime example are the string quartets of Schoenberg. They're like Proust's *In remembrance of things past* or James Joyce's *Ulysses*. People know about them, even though they're seldom read or heard. The interesting thing about music is that you can get to the end without understanding a note of it. You can't quite in a book.

This book is clearly labeled a First Edition because it is intended to be revised quickly towards a second and subsequent editions. Not only do we welcome suggestions for further inclusion, but we hope to provide information not yet available – such as listening links to tantalizing quartets as yet unheard and unrecorded at the present time, like the ones by Franco Alfano and Christian Sinding.

#### **A note on the structure of the book**

For lack of a better alternative, the quartets are listed more or less chronologically, as readers can look in the vicinity of a quartet they like for other quartets they may like, stylistically. But chronology is deceptive, of course, and it stops working as a stylistic guide from around 1900.

Where possible, the hyperlinks to hear the quartets are to videos on YouTube. In today's reality, YouTube videos are the world's largest repository of music.

Where a YouTube link is not available, we provide a link to preview the album on ClassicsOnline, the best source of erudite classical music mp3 downloads.

Lastly, please know that this eBook is simply one part of a much more ambitious, innovative project. Please visit our interactive website for the latest developments.

**[forgottenstringquartets.com](http://forgottenstringquartets.com)**

Please enjoy this book and the discoveries you're about to make.

*Lyle Chan, Anna Cerneaz and Ken Nielsen*  
– the team at Vexations840

## François Joseph Gossec (1734–1829)

String Quartet in A major Op.15 No. 6 (1772)

[Complete \(audio is mono\)](#)

Played by Musagète Quartett

After Mozart visited Gossec in Paris 1778, he described him as "a very good friend and a very dry man". His music has a French restraint; his most famous piece is the Gavotte used in so many Bugs Bunny cartoons. This lovely quartet is more characteristic. He wrote a total of twelve string quartets in 2 groups: Op. 14 (1770) and Op. 15 (1772).

## Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739-1799)

String Quartet No.1 D Major (1789)

[Complete](#)

Played by Kubin Quartet

A virtuoso violinist and very prolific composer, Dittersdorf's music circulated all across Europe in his day. He was a favorite to play in various court ensembles. See also the anecdote in the Vaňhal entry below. The Minuet of this quartet is particularly elegant.

## Jan Křtitel Vaňhal (1739–1813)

String Quartet in E, Op. 6 No. 2 (date unknown)

[Complete](#)

Played by Kubin Quartet

Known in German as Johann Baptist Vanhal, this Czech composer wrote over seventy string quartets. There's a reliable anecdote of Haydn, Dittersdorf, Mozart and Vanhal playing string quartets together around 1784. In his lifetime Vanhal's symphonies were played around and outside Europe, including the USA.

## Roman Hoffstetter (1742–1815)

String Quartet in F (formerly Haydn's Op. 4 No. 5, date unknown)

### [Complete \(audio is mono\)](#)

Played by Amadeus Quartet

This gifted Benedictine monk would have been completely unknown if a publisher hadn't tried to pass off his work as Haydn's. This quartet, containing the once-famous "Haydn's Serenade", has been wholly discarded ever since the true name of the author came to light – which is such a pity as the work is wonderful.

## **Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805)**

String Quartet in C minor, Op. 2 No. 1 (1761)

### [Allegro comodo \(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by Alea Ensemble

The prolific Boccherini wrote 91 string quartets in that cultivated, elegant style of his that often reminds you of the Baroque. Some of the most attractive are the early works, such as this quartet.

## **Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-George (1745-1799)**

### **NEW TO THIS EDITION**

String Quartet in F minor, Op. 14 No. 3 (1785)

### [Complete](#)

Performed by Apollon Quartet

[Listen on Spotify: I.](#)

[Listen on Spotify: II. Vivace](#)

Performed by Apollon Quartet

Son of a French nobleman and a black slave mother, Saint-George was a curiosity as a black composer in Parisian society. He was a favourite of Marie-Antoinette and wrote some 600 works but after being denied a directorship of the French Opera on account of his race, he joined the French army, becoming its first black colonel. About 18 tuneful string quartets exist, though he could have written more that are lost. The concise third quartet from the Op 14 set is



a great introduction.

(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions](#) to this Second Edition.)

## **Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755–1824)**

String Quartet in G, G. 114 (1815)

[Preview and purchase the album at ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Quartetto Aira

Viotti was famous as a virtuosic violinist. His string quartets were usually in the 'quatuors brillants' style, treating the first violin like a soloist. However some of his best quartets, such as this one, are written in the 'concertante' style, treating all the instruments democratically, like Haydn's mature quartets. He wrote seventeen string quartets.

## **Paul Wranitzky (1756–1808)**

String Quartet G major Op.23 No.5 (1793)

[Preview and purchase album at Arta Records](#)

Played by Pro Arte Antiqua Praga

Also spelled Pavel Vranický in Czech, he was a versatile composer whose 'magic opera' *Oberon* inspired the libretto for Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. His splendid quartets were greatly admired in their time, and just about anyone who comes across them wonders why they're not better known. He wrote seventy three string quartets.

## **Franz Krommer (1759–1831)**

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 103, No. 3 (1821)

[Preview and purchase the album at ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Marcollini Quartet

For composer whose name is basically unknown today, Franz Krommer (or František Kramář in Czech) has an astounding 3 available CDs of his string quartets. Hugely prolific with over 300 compositions, about 100 of them were

string quartets. This 1821 quartet recalls the wit of Haydn, with whom he was favourably compared.

## **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) NEW TO THIS EDITION**

String Quartet in F major, Hess 34 (arr. of Piano Sonata in E, Op. 14/1)

[First movement \(Allegro moderato\)](#)

[Listen on Spotify: I. Allegro moderato](#)

[Listen on Spotify: II. Allegretto](#)

[Listen on Spotify: III. Allegro](#)

Performed by Gewandhaus Leipzig Quartet

Can any string quartet by Beethoven be considered neglected? This extremely attractive arrangement of his ninth Piano Sonata, Op. 14 No. 1 in E major, is almost never heard. Beethoven's complained when his publisher succumbed to the fashionable 'mania' of making chamber music arrangements of piano music, and Beethoven made this arrangement himself rather than risk a bad job done by someone else. The result is this sublime piece.

*(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions](#) to this Second Edition.)*

## **Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842)**

String Quartet No 1 (1814)

[Adagio – Allegro agitato \(1st movt\)](#)

[Larghetto sans lenteur \(2nd movt\)](#)

[Scherzo, Allegro moderato \(3rd movt\)](#)

[Finale, allegro assai \(4th movt\)](#)

Played by Melos Quartet

Cherubini's six string quartets were the first important string quartets in written France. This highly original first quartet eventually became quite popular in the 19th century, though initially the unusual form (inspired by operatic drama) made it hard to understand.

## **Antonín Vranický (1761–1820)**

String Quartet in E flat (date unknown)

[Complete](#)

Played by Martinů Quartet

Also spelled Anton Wranitzky in Germany, he wrote 30 string quartets, many in the 'concertante' style with a virtuosic part for first violin, such as this quartet. His brother is the Paul Wranitzky mentioned above.

## **Adalbert Gyrowetz (1763–1850)**

String Quartet in G major, Op. 44 No. 1 (date unknown)

[Complete](#)

Played by Salomon Quartet

Mozart thought enough of the talented Gyrowetz (spelled Jírovec in Czech) to perform one of his symphonies. His quartets are more like those of Haydn, whom he revered. He wrote over 50 of them.

## **Joseph Leopold Eybler (1765–1846)**

String Quartet No. 2 in C minor, Op. 1 (1787)

[Preview and purchase album at ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Eybler Quartet

The very talented Eybler was a friend of Mozart's. Indeed, Beethoven's teacher Albrechtsberger considered Eybler the greatest genius in Vienna other than Mozart. He left 3 exciting, dramatic quartets written when he was 22 (in 1787).

## **Samuel Wesley (1766–1837)**

String Quartet in E-flat (1810)

[Allegro spiritoso \(1st movt, part 1\)](#)

[Allegro spiritoso \(1st movt, part 2\)](#)

Played by Salomon Quartet

Yes, he is related to the famous line of Wesleys. He was the son of the hymnist Charles Wesley and nephew of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church. Wesley was considered the 'English Mozart', and left just one, delightful quartet.

## **Andreas Romberg (1767–1821)**

String Quartet No. 1 in E flat (date unknown)

[Complete](#)

Played by Leipzig Quartet

Romberg was a prolific composer who also wrote a *Messiah* oratorio. He composed 29 string quartets in total, this lovely one being his very first. His cousin Bernhard Romberg wrote 11 quartets, and together they were early adopters of this relatively new genre. He wrote 29 quartets in all.

## **Ján Josef Rösler (1771–1813)**

String Quartet No. 1 in C, Op. 6 (date unknown)

[Moderato con espressione \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by Stamic Quartet

The 3 wonderful quartets by this Czech composer are joy to listen to for anyone who wishes there were more Haydn quartets. Rösler was known as a theatre composer as well as a keyboard virtuoso.

## **Antal György Csermák (c.1774–1822)**

String Quartet ("The imminent danger, or love of the fatherland")

[Preview and purchase the album on ClassicsOnline](#)

String orchestra version played by Hungarian Chamber Orchestra

This unknown Hungarian composer was an influence on Liszt. He wrote an interesting nine-movement string quartet called "The imminent danger" full of very overt use of gypsy music. It's his only known quartet, and if it's heard at all, it's in the string orchestra version.

## **Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837)**

Hummel's String Quartet No. 2 in G (1804)

[Complete \(historic mono recording\)](#)

Played by Hollywood Quartet

The highly influential Hummel's main output was for the piano, an evolving instrument during his time, and he even wrote a book about piano-playing. He left just 3 quartets, all of which are works of great skill – Op. 30, No. 1 in C major; Op. 30, No. 2 in G major and Op. 30, No. 3 in E-flat major (all c.1808).

## **Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840)**

String Quartet No. 2 (1818)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Paganini String Quartet

Paganini's 3 string quartets share the same opus number as his famous 24 Caprices for solo violin. He played these quartets quite frequently, and they are clearly written to show off the first violin in all its brilliance.

## **George Onslow (1784–1853)**

String Quartet No. 29 in D minor, Op. 55 (1834)

[Allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

[Scherzo \(2nd movt\)](#)

[Adagio cantabile \(3rd movt\)](#)

[Allegro vivce \(4th movt\)](#)

Played by Diotima Quartet

In a time when French composers were obsessed with opera, Onslow was the leading chamber music composer. Schumann and Mendelssohn considered his quartets to be on par with the best Viennese quartets. He wrote 36 between 1810 and 1845, and this 29th is one of the best.

## **Louis Spohr (1784–1859)**

String Quartet No. 20 in A minor (1825)

### [Complete](#)

Played by New Budapest Quartet

It's telling how easily forgotten Spohr is. He was incredibly famous in his time, and innovative – being the first major conductor to use a baton, and the inventor of the chin-rest for the violin. He left 36 string quartets, all of which are worthy of discovery, such as this magnificent one in A minor. Spohr also wrote four double quartets (for two string quartets).

## **Franz Berwald (1796–1868)**

String Quartet No. 2 in A minor (1849)

### [Complete](#)

Played by Copenhagen String Quartet

This talented and highly original Swedish composer was a connoisseur's composer even during his time. He was posthumously championed by the likes of Carl Nielsen. This 2nd quartet shows Berwald's tendency towards novelty of form. He wrote three string quartets, No. 1 in G minor (1818), No. 2 in A minor (1849), and No. 3 in E-flat major (also 1849).

## **Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848)**

String Quartet No. 17 (1825)

### [Allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

### [Larghetto \(2nd movt\)](#)

Played by Quartetto d'archi del Teatro la Fenice

Almost no one knows that the great opera composer Donizetti wrote 18 string quartets. The 17th is a great discovery, full of sumptuous tunes.

## **Franz Schubert (1797–1828)**

String quartet No. 8 in B flat, D. 112 (1814)

### [Complete](#)

Played by Amadeus Quartet

We hear the last 4 quartets of Schubert regularly, but we don't hear the other

11. Of those, the 8th is as gorgeous a work as the *Trout Quintet*. Absolutely worth listening to.

## **Jan Kalliwoda (1801–1866)**

String Quartet No. 3 in G, Op. 90 (1830)

[Preview the album on Allmusic](#)

[Purchase the album on Amazon](#)

Played by Quatuor Talich

Kalliwoda (or spelled Kalivoda in his native Czech) was very prolific, with over 250 works with opus numbers. He was held in such high regard that the very first concert of the New York Philharmonic (1842) ended with a work of his. The third of his 3 string quartets is an extremely virtuosic, even spectacular work.

## **Bernhard Molique (1802–1869)**

String Quartet No. 3, Op. 18 (1843)

[Complete](#)

Played by Mannheim Quartet.

Though he was a violinist and wrote many works for string instruments, Molique today is ironically known for his woodwind concertos, particularly his exciting oboe concerto. His 3rd quartet is a tuneful work with a rather operatic slow movement. He wrote eight string quartets in total.

## **Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857)**

String Quartet No. 2 in F (1830)

[Preview and purchase the album from Amazon](#)

Played by Quatuor Anton

Considered the 'father' of Russian music, the only work of Glinka's heard today is the overture to his opera *Ruslan and Ludmila*. His second quartet has a lovely elegance about it.

## **Fanny Mendelssohn (1805–1847)**

String Quartet in E-flat (1834)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Merel Quartet

Sister of the precocious Felix and equally talented by all accounts, Fanny Mendelssohn wrote many songs and piano pieces but left only one string quartet, well-worth discovering.

## **Juan Crisóstomo Arriaga (1806–1826)**

String Quartet No. 3 in E flat (1824)

[Allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

[Andantino \(2nd movt\)](#)

[Menuetto \(3rd movt\)](#)

[Presto agitato \(4th movt\)](#)

Played by Quiroga String Quartet

Born on Mozart's birthday and dying even younger than that great composer (age 19), Arriaga is one of the great could-have-been's in music. The influence of Beethoven is palpable and the 4th movement is particularly memorable. He wrote three great quartets (all 1824): No. 1 in D minor; No. 2 in A major; No. 3 in E-flat major.

## **Ignaz Lachner (1807–1895)**

String Quartet No. 6 in A minor, op. 105 (composed before 1875)

[Preview excerpts at Edition Silvertrust](#)

Players unknown

There were 3 famous Lachner brothers and Ignaz was the middle one. His quartets are light, diverting works and though German, are the epitome of the Viennese charm. He wrote 6 'normal' quartets, plus unusual quartets made up of 3 violins and viola or 4 violins.



## Norbert Burgmüller (1810–1836)

String Quartet No. 4 in A minor (1835)

[Allegro moderato \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by Mannheim Quartet

Schumann wrote that no early death of a composer was more regrettable than those of Schubert and Burgmüller. The latter drowned during an epileptic seizure aged 26. This 4th quartet is just ravishing. He wrote four string quartets: Op. 4 in D minor, Op. 7 in D minor, Op. 9 in A-flat major, and Op. 14 in A minor.

## Robert Volkmann (1815–1883)

String Quartet No. 4, Op. 35 (1857)

[Preview excerpts at Edition Silvertrust](#)

Played by unknown ensemble

This German Romantic composer led an uneventful life so he's hard to talk about, but he did produce very high quality music. He was one of Brahms' friends. His fourth quartet has a touching slow movement. Volkmann wrote six string quartets.

## Niels Gade (1817–1890)

String Quartet in E minor (1877/1889)

[Complete](#)

Played by Clara Bæk, violin; Sophia Bæk, violin; Stine Hasbirk, viola; Therese Åstrand, cello.

The most important Danish composer of the 19th century, and a friend of Mendelssohn's. We'll probably never know why he published only one of his 4 quartets. This gentle, beautiful work was written when he was 60 and revised when he was 72, and only published posthumously. His one published quartet is in D major, Op. 63.

## Henri Vieuxtemps (1820–1881)

String Quartet No. 3 (c. 1875)

[Preview the album on Edition Silvertrust](#)

[Purchase the album from Amazon](#)

Played by Maurice Raskin Quartet

Vieuxtemps is known as a composer of showpieces for the violin. He was an advocate of Beethoven's string quartets, and you can hear that influence in this cheery work. He wrote three string quartets (in E minor, Op. 44, in C major, Op. 51, in B-flat, Op. 52)

## Joachim Raff (1822–1882)

String Quartet No. 7 "Die Schöne Müllerin" (1874)

[Complete](#)

Played by Quartetto di Milano

Up until the World War I, this was played frequently in string quartet concerts. You can't help but be transported by this beguiling work. It's endlessly melodic, like Schubert. It's unknown how Raff intended this 6-movement happy work to be related to that composer's tragic song cycle of the same name which he must have known. He wrote eight string quartets (1855 to 1876).

## Bedrich Smetana (1824–1884)

String Quartet No. 2 in D minor (1883)

[Part 1 \(movts 1 and 2\)](#)

[Part 2 \(movts 3 and 4\)](#)

Played by Smetana Quartet

A fierce, truly great work, once misunderstood as the crumbling thoughts of a man descending into syphilitic madness. It deserves to be heard as often as Smetana's popular first quartet ("From My Life"). Smetana only wrote 2 quartets.

## Franz Liszt (1811-1886) – NEW TO THIS EDITION

Angelus! Prière aux anges gardiens (1880-2)

[Listen on Spotify \(string orchestra version\)](#)

Played by St. Martin's Symphony of London

Being a 'New School' composer, Liszt mainly rejected classical forms and this sensitive *Angelus!* is his only composition for string quartet. Virtually all Liszt's chamber music is made of transcriptions of his piano and other works, and *Angelus!* is a reworking of a piano piece from his third *Years of Pilgrimage*. "This is a favourite with me," Liszt is reported to have said, "though I do not generally like my own music – it is not a very perfect piece, but you know, a parent loves the defective child the most." This might explain why even the quartet version was revised twice by Liszt. These days, the string quartet is only ever heard played by string orchestras.

(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions](#) to this Second Edition.)

## Anton Bruckner (1824–1896)

String Quartet in C minor (1862)

[Allegro moderato](#)

[Andante](#)

[Scherzo](#)

[Rondo](#)

Performed by Fine Arts Quartet

Written when he was 38 and uncharacteristic of the symphonic Bruckner, this is nonetheless a very enjoyable piece – recommended especially to those who don't like the symphonies. This is his only quartet.

## Anton Rubinstein (1829–1894)

String Quartet No. 3 in F (Op. 17 No. 3, c.1855)

[Allegro moderato, ma con moto \(1st movt\)](#)

[Scherzo. Allegro molto \(2nd movt\)](#)

[Allegro assai \(4th movt\)](#)

Played by Covington String Quartet (mono)

A powerhouse of the Russian arts community, Rubinstein founded the St Petersburg Conservatory, while his brother Nikolay founded the Moscow Conservatory. His 3rd quartet is a beautiful work, not unlike those of his teacher Mendelssohn. He wrote ten string quartets spread throughout his life.

## **Karl Goldmark (1830–1915)**

String Quartet in B-flat, Op.8 (1860)

[Preview and purchase the album at ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Klenke Quartet

The only work of Goldmark's played today with any regularity is his Wedding March. This quartet is rather much in the style of Schumann, and like that composer's quartets, is a little slow to reveal its beauty, but it's there. The other work of Goldmark's that really deserves more attention is his Violin Concerto No. 1.

## **Alexander Borodin (1833–1887)**

[Moderato – Allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by Borodin Quartet

Borodin's first quartet will forever be eclipsed by the fitting attention paid to his second. Nonetheless, it's a gorgeous work in itself. Here's the touching first movement. He wrote two string quartets: No. 1 in A (1879) and No. 2 in D (1881), the latter being the source of so many tunes in the Broadway musical *Kismet*.

## **Felix Draeseke (1835–1913)**

String Quartet No. 2 in E minor (1886)

[Allegro moderato \(1st movt excerpt, starts at 1:00 in this German documentary\)](#)

Played by unknown ensemble

The German Romantic composer Felix Draeseke is the subject of a small but very committed group of champions today (including Alfred Brendel). Even

in his day, he was a connoisseur's composer, not unlike Brahms really. His third symphony was considered one of the best of the later 19th century. Here's a tantalizing excerpt from his 2nd quartet, with a beautiful cello melody. He wrote three string quartets between 1880 and 1895.

## **Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)**

String Quartet No. 1 in E minor , Op. 112 (1889)

[Molto Adagio \(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by Viotti Quartet

The quartets of Saint-Saens are one of the reasons the Forgotten String Quartets project was brought about – how is it that music that sounds like this is so little known? Here is the slow movement of his first quartet. He wrote two string quartets: Op. 112 (1889) and Op. 153 (1918)

## **Max Bruch (1838–1920)**

String Quartet No. 1 in C minor (1858)

[Complete](#)

Played by Quartetto Academica

Bruch's works are so consistently good and so brilliantly melodic that it's a wonder his chamber works, such as his first quartet, aren't as famous as his great solo violin pieces. He wrote two relatively early string quartets, Op. 9 in C minor (1858/9) and Op. 10 in E major (1860)

## **Josef Rheinberger (1839–1901)**

String Quartet No. 1 (1876)

[Complete](#)

Played by Camerata Quartet

Rheinberger is extremely well known to organists as the composer of pinnacle Romantic organ music. But he also wrote a substantial amount of chamber music, all virtually unknown. The first of his two quartets has a particularly beautiful opening. He wrote two string quartets, in C minor, Op. 89 and F major, Op. 147.

## Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

String Quartet No. 2 (1874)

[Adagio – Moderatio \(1st movt\)](#)

[Andante ma non tanto\(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by Atrium Quartet

None of the 3 quartets by Tchaikovsky is really played with any frequency, though there's the illusion that the first is because its slow movement 'Andante cantabile' is so famous. Tchaikovsky's long 2nd quartet was a personal favourite of his, and he was surprised the public didn't embrace it right away. His three quartets are No. 1 in D, Op. 11 (1871); No. 2 in F, Op. 22 (1873); and No. 3 in E-flat minor, Op. 30 (1876).

## Johan Svendsen (1840–1911)

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 1 (1865)

[Allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

[Andantino \(2nd movt\)](#)

[Allegro scherzando \(3rd movt\)](#)

[Finale \(4th movt\)](#)

Played by Kontra Quartet

This Norwegian-born Danish composer is completely unknown outside of Scandinavia (except perhaps to theatre-goers who know that the famous incident in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* where Hedda burns Lövborg's manuscript was inspired by Svendsen's wife throwing pages from his third symphony into the fire). This very wonderful, Romantic string quartet awaits discovery. It's his only one.

## Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

String Quartet No. 9 in D minor, Op. 34 (1877)

[Allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

[Alla Polka \(2nd movt\)](#)

[Adagio \(3rd movt\)](#)

[Finale \(4th movt\)](#)

Played by Sedláček Quartet

Ah, the great Dvořák – composer of a string quartet so famous (The American) that the other 13 he wrote are almost never heard. His 9th quartet is of immense Schubertian beauty.

## **Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)**

String Quartet No. 2 in F (1891)

[Sostenuto - Allegro vivace \(1st movt\)](#)

[Allegro scherzando \(2nd movt\)](#)

Played by Oslo String Quartet

This will remain one of the great 'torso' works of classical music. Grieg wrote these two movements quite easily, but then spent the next 15 years wondering how to finish the piece, and never did. Well worth hearing. His other quartet, the first in E minor, is quite well known.

## **Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908)**

String Quartet on Russian Themes (1878–1879)

[In A Monastery \(4th movt\)](#)

Played by Lyric Quartet

Most of Rimsky-Korsakov's quartet works were part of that Russian predilection for collaborative string quartet compositions where a different composer wrote each movement. Rimsky took part in 4 such works. Of his own quartets, the one based on Russian themes is very attractive. This movement is often played by itself. He wrote three complete string quartets of his own.

## **'Les Vendredis' (various composers) NEW TO THIS EDITION**

[Complete \(4 videos\)](#)

Performed by Dante Quartet

[Listen on Spotify: Selections from Les Vendredis](#)

Performed by Le Quatuor Ravel

As we wrote about in our Rimsky-Korsakov entry, the Russians had a penchant for the multi-composer string quartet. Here's a twist to that

phenomenon. *Les Vendredis* is a collection of 16 pieces written by 11 composers. Mitrofan Belyayev was a wealthy wood dealer who founded a music publishing house. Starting in 1891 in his St Petersburg house he hosted string quartet "Fridays" ("Les Vendredis"). Only amateurs were allowed to play (including Belyayev himself playing viola) but the music was written by professionals. Amongst the composers who contributed were Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Liadov, Glazunov and many now-unknown Russian composers like Maximilian D'Osten-Sacken and Felix Blumenfeld. In 1903, after Belyayev's death, 16 of the dozens of pieces were selected by Rimsky for publication – and every one is a gem, from Blumenfeld's beautiful opening Sarabande to Sokolov's final mischievous Mazurka.

(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions](#) to this Second Edition.)

## **Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)**

String Quartet in E minor, Op. 121 (1924)

[Allegro \(final movt\)](#)

Played by Quatuor Ebene

His very last chamber work, it's like all late Fauré pieces – these masterpieces are subtle to a fault. Hence it is a favourite of connoisseurs who have taken the time to get to know the work, and everyone else just needs to listen more times to get past Fauré's gorgeous restraint.

## **Robert Fuchs (1847–1927)**

String Quartet No. 4 in A, Op. 106 (1916)

[Preview the album on Allmusic](#)

[Purchase the album on ArkivMusic](#)

Played by Minguet Quartet

Fuchs was one of the very few composers that Brahms publicly praised. But he's almost as unknown today as he was in his day, when he was regarded as a great teacher, but a composer of serenades. These are truly great chamber works from turn-of-the-century Vienna. There are four known quartets between 1895 and 1916; there's the possibility of a 5th at the Austrian



National Library.

## Alexander Mackenzie (1847–1935)

String Quartet in G (1868)

[Preview and purchase the album on Amazon](#)

Played by Edinburgh Quartet

Though not at all known today, this Scottish composer is regarded as being as important as Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford in bringing about Britain's new interest in homegrown composers, after centuries of neglect. His only string quartet is a youthful, vigorous work clearly inspired by Viennese masters like Mozart and Schubert.

## Zdeněk Fibich (1850–1900)

String Quartet No. 1 in A (1874)

[Allegretto \(3<sup>rd</sup> movt\)](#)

Played by Talich Quartet

A wonderful Czech composer who lived around the same time as Smetana and Dvorak, he left 2 quartets which are simple and joyous to hear: one in A major, 1874, and the other in G major, 1878 – he also wrote a set of variations for quartet (B-flat, 1883).

## Vincent d'Indy (1851–1931)

String Quartet No. 3 in D-flat (1928-9)

[Entrée. Allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

[Intermède \(assez joyeux\) \(2nd movt\)](#)

[Thème varié \(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by New Budapest String Quartet

D'Indy's three quartets are some of the greatest chamber music ever written in France. His third is just splendid, a great discovery for people who wish Franck had written more than just one quartet.

## **Albert Roussel (1869-1937) – NEW TO THIS EDITION**

String Quartet in D major, Op.45 (1931-2)

[I. Allegro](#)

[II. Adagio](#)

[III. Allegro vivo and IV. Allegro moderato](#)

[Listen on Spotify: I Allegro](#)

[Listen on Spotify: II Adagio](#)

[Listen on Spotify: III Allegro vivo](#)

[Listen on Spotify: IV Allegro moderato](#)

Performed by Via Nova Quartet

Roussel is almost forgotten today, but he was the dominant French composer between the world wars. So talented was he that Roussel was appointed professor of counterpoint at the Schola Cantorum while he was still a student there. Like his contemporaries Debussy and Ravel, he only wrote a single quartet, but unlike theirs, it's not a youthful work but one written in the last years of his life. A magnificent piece.

*(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions](#) to this Second Edition.)*

## **Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924)**

String Quartet No. 2 (1891)

[Preview and purchase the album from Hyperion Records](#)

Played by RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet

Today only known for his choral and organ works, this Irish composer also wrote many operas and symphonies that simply haven't endured. His friendship with the great violinist Joseph Joachim was probably the reason he also wrote 8 string quartets (1891–1919). The second is an interesting cyclical work, with related themes across the movements, and evidence of his love of Beethoven.

## **Ernest Chausson (1855–1899)**

String Quartet in C minor, Op. 35 (1898-1900)

[Complete](#)

Played by Kodaly Quartet

This is a work that verges on being disqualified as a 'forgotten' piece as there are quite a few recordings of it, though it's seldom heard in concerts. It's Chausson's very last work, the piece he had almost finished writing before his fatal bicycle accident. His friend Vincent d'Indy made the completion. For those who love the Debussy and Ravel quartets, this is a beautiful extension of that style.

## **Sergei Ivanovich Taneyev (1856–1915)**

String Quartet No. 4 in A minor, Op. 11 (1898-9)

[Preview and purchase the album on ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Carpe Diem Quartet

This brilliant composer was Tchaikovsky's closest musician friend and their music is rather similar. He wrote nine complete string quartets, and two incomplete ones.

## **Ethel Smyth (1858–1944)**

String Quartet in E minor (1902-12)

[Preview on Allmusic](#)

[Purchase on Amazon](#)

Played by Mannheim String Quartet

There was an Ethel Smyth craze about 20 years ago but this colourful figure seems to have fallen into semi-obscurity again. In her only string quartet you can hear her veneration of Brahms, but with a jollity to it. She wrote one other string quartet, in C minor, from her student days in Leipzig.

## **Emil von Reznicek (1860–1945)**

String Quartet No. 1 (1921)

[Preview and purchase the album on ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Franz Schubert Quartet

Reznicek's *Donna Diana* was a hugely popular opera after its premiere in 1894, and its overture used to be played frequently, becoming a 'pops' concert staple. His first quartet is 4 movements of great tunes, well worth investigating. He wrote 4 quartets in total.

## Hugo Wolf (1860–1903)

Intermezzo for string quartet (1886)

[Preview and purchase the album on ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Wihan Quartet

Wolf's *Italian Serenade* is a constant enough feature in concerts that no one really remembers he wrote a full string quartet as well as this very interesting *Intermezzo*, arguably his best work for quartet. He also wrote an early string quartet from 1884 .

## Charles Martin Loeffler (1861–1935)

Music for Four Stringed Instruments (1917)

[Preview and purchase the album at ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Da Vinci Quartet

This is one of the very best works by this early American composer and violinist. It's really worth exploring: three rather mysterious, quite heartfelt movements make it so unusual that you understand why he didn't just call it a string quartet. Loeffler was friends with quite a few famous contemporaries like Fauré, Busoni and Gershwin. He wrote one other string quartet, in A minor (1889).

## Frederick Delius (1862–1934)

String Quartet (1916)

[Part 1 \(1st and 2nd movts\)](#)

[Part 2 \(3rd and 4th movts\)](#)

String orchestra version played by New Zealand Chamber Orchestra / Nicholas Braithwaite

Delius' only string quartet is a stunningly beautiful piece and it's an utter mystery why such a work by a relatively famous composer is so rarely heard.

## **Felix Weingartner (1863–1942)**

String Quartet No. 3 (1903)

[Preview and purchase the album on ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Sarastro Quartet

Only known these days as a great conductor whose work thankfully coincided with the early years of the recording technology, Weingartner was also a composer. In this quartet, the debt to Brahms is unmistakable, but who doesn't wish the antiprolific Brahms had left us more music? He wrote four string quartets (in D minor, Op. 24 (1899), in F minor, Op. 26 (1900), in F, Op. 34 (1903) and in D, Op. 62 (1918).

## **Eugen d'Albert (1864–1932)**

String Quartet No. 1 in A minor (1887)

[Preview the album on Allmusic](#)

Played by Sarastro Quartet

(unfortunately the recording is out of print)

These utterly beautiful works, particularly the first quartet, truly deserve more attention. D'Albert was born Scottish, but fell in love with Germany at the age of 17 and lived there ever after, considering himself German. Very famous in his time, the only work of his now ever performed is his opera *Tiefland*. He wrote two string quartets in A minor, Op. 7 (1887) and in E-flat, Op. 11 (1893).

## **Alexander Gretchaninov (1864–1956)**

String Quartet No. 4 (1929)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Moyzes Quartet

Gretchaninov is known mostly for his large symphonic and choral works but

there is a small quantity of chamber music, as good as his best works. This 4th quartet is reminiscent of the much earlier Tchaikovsky quartets. He wrote four string quartets: No. 1 in G major, Op. 2 (1894); No. 2 in D minor, Op. 70 (1913); No. 3 in C minor, Op. 75 (1915); No. 4 in F major, Op. 124 -1929

## **Alberto Nepomuceno (1864–1920)**

Serenata for string quartet (1902)

[Complete](#)

Played by Villa Lobos String Quartet

In contrast to the seriousness of so many quartets being recommended in this period, try a delightful Serenata by this Brazilian composer. One of his orchestral pieces performed admirably by Richard Strauss. He and Grieg were friends, and Grieg encouraged him to write nationalistically. He wrote three full string quartets.

## **Guy Ropartz (1864–1955)**

String Quartet No. 4 (1936)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Stanislas Quartet

All six quartets of Ropartz's (written 1893–1951) are excellent, beautiful and await discovery. No. 4 is a particular joy to listen to, with its wonderful lilt. Incidentally, Ropartz was responsible for reconstructing the orchestration for Magnard's opera after the latter's death (see later). Just for laughs, check out [this interpretation](#) of Ropartz's 4th string quartet. Now, who has that much time on their hands AND knows Ropartz's music?

## **Richard Strauss (1864–1949)**

String Quartet in A Major, Op. 2

[Allegro \(1<sup>st</sup> movt\)](#)

[Scherzo: Allegro molto \(2<sup>nd</sup> movt\)](#)

[Andante cantabile, molto espressivo \(3<sup>rd</sup> movt\)](#)

[Finale: Allegro vivace \(4<sup>th</sup> movt\)](#)

Played by Sinnhoffer Quartet

This work will bring a smile to your face if you're expecting the Richard Strauss of *Salome* or *Der Rosenkavalier*. This skillful early work would make a great alternative to starting a concert with Mozart.

## **Alexander Glazunov (1865–1936)**

String Quartet No. 3, Op. 26 (Quatuor Slave, 1886-1888)

[Finale \(unfortunately drowned in artificial reverberation\)](#)

Played by the Glazunov String Quartet

Glazunov was a deeply conservative composer who was nonetheless fascinated by new styles, continuing to listen to and study Strauss even though he didn't understand it. His *Novelletes* for string quartet are somewhat popular, and this little-heard 3rd quartet has a similar energy. He wrote seven string quartets.

## **Albéric Magnard (1865–1914)**

String Quartet in E minor, Op. 16 (1903)

[Sonate \(1st movt, part 1\)](#)

[Sonate \(1st movt, part 2\)](#)

Played by Quatuor Via Nova

Quartets such as this powerful one by Magnard are the reason the Forgotten String Quartets project was created. This is a dark, almost un-French work by a composer who died much too early, shot refusing to surrender his house to German soldiers in World War I. Magnard's small but consistently high quality output will impress anyone. This is Magnard's only string quartet.

## **Carl Nielsen (1865–1931)**

String Quartet No. 3 in E flat, Op. 14 (1899)

[Allegro pastorale and Finale \(3rd and 4th movts\)](#)

Played by the Danish Quartet

This quartet has an 'infamy' in that Nielsen had to rewrite these very 3rd and 4th movements after his original manuscripts were stolen by a boy he

entrusted them to while he stopped to help an injured horse... This Danish composer wrote four published string quartets, plus smaller works for quartet.

## **Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924)**

String Quartet No. 2 (1887)

[Preview and download the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Pellegrini Quartet

Busoni is either known as the adapter of Bach's music for modern piano, or the composer of a massive piano concerto requiring a choir. Here though is a deft, very listenable piece from his early maturity. He wrote two string quartets, Op. 19 in C minor (1884) and Op. 26 in D minor (1887)

## **Amy Beach (1867–1944)**

String Quartet in One Movement, Op. 89 (1921)

[Preview and purchase the album here.](#)

Played by Ambache Chamber Ensemble

Mrs H. H. A. Beach, as she was known professionally, wrote only one work in each of many genres, except the songs and piano music that form the bulk of her output. Her only string quartet makes interesting use of Inuit or Eskimo melodies.

## **Charles Koechlin (1867–1950)**

String Quartet No. 1 (1911-13)

[Preview and purchase the album from Amazon](#)

Played by Ardeo Quartet

Extremely prolific, the fascinating polymath Charles Koechlin nonetheless only wrote three string quartets, the last of which possibly has never been recorded. The first quartet has a beautiful slow movement worth discovering. He wrote three string quartets, in D Op. 51 (1911–13), Op. 57 (1911–16), Op. 72 in D (1917–21).

## **John Blackwood McEwen (1868–1948)**



String Quartet No. 2 (1898)

[Preview and purchase the album here](#)

Played by Chilingirian Quartet

Grove Dictionary wrote John Blackwood McEwen was "perhaps the most grievously neglected British composer of his generation". He wrote 17 string quartets from 1898 to 1947. Unlike the cases of Pfitzner and Hill you'll see later, McEwen turned a symphony into this string quartet.

## **Hans Pfitzner (1869–1949)**

String Quartet in C-sharp minor, Op. 36 (1925)

[Ziemlich ruhig \(Moderato, 1st movt\)](#)

Played by Friedrich Eckart, Daniel Thieme, Natalia Lubimova, Rolf Herbrechtsmeyer

This beautiful work really deserves more recordings. There is a good Wihan Quartet recording of it you can purchase [here](#), but the players on this YouTube video really bring out the ardour of the work despite the substandard sound quality. Pfitzner wrote four string quartets, which can be confusing to identify unless you know their opus numbers – D minor, without Op. number, 1886; D major, Op. 13 1903, C# minor, Op. 36 from 1925 – later arranged into a symphony – and C minor, Op. 50, 1942.

## **Alfred Hill (1870–1960)**

String Quartet No. 8 in A (1934)

[The Mind of Man and Intermezzo \(first 2 movts\) \[this is the orchestral version\]](#)

[Preview and purchase the album on ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Dominion Quartet

Like the Pfitzner above, Alfred Hill adapted his 8th string quartet into a symphony for strings some twenty years later. He did this with several quartets as conductors wanted more music from him. If you like Elgar, try this. This Australian composer wrote seventeen string quartets in all.

## **Vítězslav Novák (1870–1949)**

String Quartet No. 2 in D (1904)

[Fugue \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by Smetana Quartet

This has got to be one of the most beautiful fugues ever written. It forms the long first movement of Novak's second quartet, a work in only 2 movements. You could say he was the leading Czech composer between Dvorak and Janacek. Novak wrote three quartets (1899–1938)

## **Florent Schmitt (1870–1958)**

String Quartet in G, Op. 112 (1947)

No recordings available.

This is a very tantalizing work. The talented French composer Florent Schmitt is now completely unknown, but he was frequently heard in his time. His pro-German stance during World War II doesn't help his reputation today. His only String Quartet is not recorded, but meanwhile listen to his (much earlier) Piano Quintet [here](#).

## **Louis Vierne (1870–1937)**

String Quartet (1894)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Quatuor Phillips

Vierne was a prolific organ composer but he also produced some very fine chamber music that included a single string quartet. If you like Franck's quartet, this is an interesting extension of that style.

## **Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871–1927)**

String Quartet No. 6 (1916)

[Complete](#)

Played by the Copenhagen Quartet

This is a generous, gorgeous piece of late Romanticism. This Swedish composer was inspired by Nielsen and Sibelius to create a 'Nordic' sound. He

wrote six string quartets.

## Alexander von Zemlinsky (1871–1942)

String Quartet No. 3 (1924)

[Complete](#)

Played by the Schoenberg Quartet

Very much in the German Expressionist style, you'll like this if you like Schoenberg's pre-12-tone music from about the same period. It's a paradox of austerity and lushness. If not for his Mahlerian *Lyric Symphony*, Zemlinsky would be unknown today. He wrote four string quartets between 1896 and 1936 and two movements for string quartet in 1927.

## Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

String Quartet in C minor (1897-8)

[Intermezzo \(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by Nash Ensemble

Vaughan Williams wrote two official string quartets, which are somewhat known to lovers of English chamber music. However he also wrote one quartet in his student days which is worth discovering for its straightforward tunefulness. The numbered quartets are No. 1 in G minor (1908, rev. 1921) and No. 2 in A minor (1942/3)

## Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947)

String Quartet No. 2 (1943)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Quatuor Parisii

Hahn is very well known to lovers of French art songs, but he also wrote graceful, subtle chamber music. If you like Fauré, you'll find this a beautiful continuation of that style. He wrote two string quartets (A minor from 1939, F major from 1943)

## Charles Ives (1874–1954)

String Quartet No.1 'From the Salvation Army' (1896)

[Complete](#)

Played by Blair String Quartet

The quartets of Ives almost don't qualify as neglected works, as they're 'textbook-famous'. The second quartet is more characteristic of his pugnacious style but his first one from his student days already betrays his love of popular tunes, is very well-written and charming. Ives wrote two string quartets (1896 and 1913).

## **Paul Juon (1872–1940)**

String Quartet in B minor, Op. 11 (1896)

[Preview album at Allmusic](#)

[Purchase album from Amazon](#)

Played by Niziol Quartet

This little-known Swiss composer wrote very beautiful music. As with the Ives, we could have chosen his mature op 67 quartet, but this early work is very attractive and melodic. Here's a bit of trivia: his Op. 11 is a string quartet in B minor. Which other composer's op.11 is also a string quartet in B minor. Hint: it's very famous, so it's not included in this Guide. Juon wrote four string quartets in total: Op. 5, Op. 11 in B minor, Op. 29 in A minor and Op. 67 in C.

## **Max Reger (1873–1916)**

String Quartet in D minor, Op.74 (1903-4)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by the Philharmonia Quartet

At 55 minutes in duration, this fantastic work is one of the longest string quartets around. The rather academic Reger wrote six string quartets (including an early work with an optional double bass). Reger was known for his crude humor, and wrote perhaps the most infamous of replies to a music critic. To Rudolph Louis, critic for the Muchner Neuste Nachrichten he wrote: "I am sitting in the smallest room of my house. I have your review before me. In a moment it will be behind me!" ("ich sitze in dem kleinsten Zimmer in

meinem Hause. Ich habe ihre Kritik vor mir. Im nächsten Augenblick wird sie hinter mir sein")

## **Franz Schmidt (1874–1939)**

String Quartet No. 2 (1929)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by the Franz Schubert Quartet

Schmidt was one of the composers allowed to be performed during the Nazi regime, placing his reputation under a cloud. In truth, he was politically quite naïve, equally happy to accept Nazi commissions as well as recommend Jewish works for performance. This very fresh, tuneful quartet will be a nice discovery for anyone who likes Liszt and Bruckner. Schmidt wrote two quartets: one in A (1925), and one in G (1929)

## **Josef Suk (1874–1935)**

String Quartet No. 2, Op. 31 (1911)

[Preview and purchase album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Penguin Quartet

This extremely fine quartet, quite adventurous, is nothing like his best known quartet work, the simpler *Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale*. Suk wrote two formal string quartets, Op. 11 (1896) and Op. 31 (1911)

## **Franco Alfano (1875–1954)**

String Quartets Nos 1-3

Unheard.

We haven't heard these quartets by Alfano and can't find any recordings. But based on the outstanding quality of his violin sonata and cello sonata, these unheard works are of great interest. Alfano is most well known as the composer who completed Puccini's *Turandot* after that composer's death. He wrote some 15 operas himself, but unlike other opera composers of the time, he also wrote symphonies and other instrumental music.

## **Reinhold Glière (1875–1956)**

String Quartet No 2 in G minor (1905)

[Allegro moderato \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by Pulzus String Quartet.

A beautiful, distinctively Russian work, full of glorious melodies. Also, his Octet (for double string quartet) is another work awaiting general discovery. Glière wrote four string quartets: in A major, Op. 2 (1899), in G minor, Op. 20 (1905), in D minor, Op. 67 (1927), in F minor, Op. 83 (1943)

## **Fritz Kreisler (1875–1962)**

String Quartet in A minor (1919)

[Fantasia \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by members of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

A terrific, substantial and very listenable work from a composer otherwise more known for his lollipops for violin. This is Kreisler's only work for string quartet.

## **Erno Dohnányi (1877–1960)**

String Quartet No. 2 in D Major (1906)

[Complete](#)

Played by Guarneri Quartet

A very Romantic, passionate work. You can tell this Hungarian composer loved Beethoven and Schubert, whose works he played as a pianist. Dohnányi wrote three string quartets (1899, 1906, 1926).

## **Lucien Durosoir (1878–1955)**

String Quartet No. 3 (1933-34)

[Preview and purchase the album at ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Quatuor Diotima

This sumptuous work is likely to be a discovery for even the most devoted

lovers of chamber music. Durosoir was a talented violinist whose concert career ended when World War I broke. He formed a string quartet with his fellow soldiers including the composer André Caplet playing viola. Caplet remained a great enthusiast of Durosoir's compositions. Durosoir wrote three string quartets (1920, 1922, 1933–34)

## **Frank Bridge (1879–1941)**

An Irish Melody (1908)

[Complete](#)

Played by unknown ensemble.

In around 1908, the Hambourg Quartet asked several English composers to each write a movement of a work called the "Hambourg Quartet". They were Hamilton Harty, John David Davis, Eric Coates, York Bowen, and Frank Bridge who wrote the first movement. This beautiful, surprisingly dark piece is based on the famous 'Londonderry Air'. Bridge wrote five complete string quartets between 1901 and 1937.

## **Jean Cras (1879–1932)**

String Quartet 'À ma Bretagne' (1909)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Louvigny Quartet

Here's another French composer that is almost guaranteed to be unknown to any music lover. Jean Cras was an officer in the French navy, achieving the rank of Rear Admiral. He was a good friend of Henri Duparc. The music Cras wrote is wonderfully subtle and sensuous. He left only one string quartet. His descendants are to be thanked for the recent increase in available recordings.

## **John Ireland (1879–1962)**

String Quartet No. 2 in C minor

[Preview and purchase album at ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Maggini Quartet

John Ireland's only string quartets date from his student days, but they are

exceptional achievements. Ireland must have thought so himself, as he destroyed his other student works.

## Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936)

Quartetto Dorico (1924)

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

Played by Venice String Quartet

This is Respighi's most intriguing quartet, using his love of ancient music to explore eight modes or scales in this half-hour long work. Respighi wrote three string quartets: D major (1907), D minor (1909) and Quartetto Dorico (1924).

## Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)

[Prelude \(1925\)](#)

Played by Galatea Quartet

Bloch sometimes has the (unfair) reputation of being a turgid composer, but this will be laid to rest by anyone hearing this lovely Prelude. He wrote five string quartets, plus some descriptive works for quartet with names like *Landscape* and *In the mountains*. Once quite popular, they've completely dropped out of earshot.

## Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973) **NEW TO THIS EDITION**

String Quartet No. 1 ("Rispetti e strambotti", 1920)

[Complete](#)

Performed by Orpheus Quartet

[Listen on Spotify: String Quartet No. 1](#)

Performed by Quartetto d'Archi di Venezia

If Malipiero's name is known at all today, it's because of his editorial work in publishing the complete works of Monteverdi and a lot of Vivaldi's music. But he was also professor of composition at conservatories in Parma and



Venice and in his own works tried to create a distinctly Italian style that rejected what he considered the dominance of the Austro-German tradition. He wrote 8 powerful string quartets, and when asked to list his most important works for an encyclopedia, this was the only quartet he nominated. The title refers to love poems and songs from the Italian Renaissance.

(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions](#) to this Second Edition.)

## Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880–1968)

String Quartet No. 1 (1906)

[Preview and purchase the album on iTunes](#)

Played by Lajtha Quartet

Italians know this composer well, as he was a very influential teacher and critic, but few other music lovers will have heard of him. This is an attractive, high Romantic piece well worth discovering. Pizzetti wrote two string quartets, in A major (1906) and D major (1932-3)

## Samuel Barber (1910-1981) – **NEW TO THIS EDITION**

String Quartet, Op. 11 (1937 version)

[Molto allegro \(3rd movement\)](#)

Performed by Providence String Quartet

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Historic mono recording performed by Curtis Quartet

*(note: for copyright reasons, this link will not work in some countries)*

Preview and purchase on iTunes:

[I. Molto allegro e appassionato](#)

[II. Adagio](#)

[III. Molto allegro – Presto](#)

Historic mono recording performed by Curtis Quartet

Barber's String Quartet, Op. 11 is relatively well-known because of its famous slow movement, the Adagio. But even its most enthusiastic fans don't know that there exist 2 earlier versions of this work, because Barber had trouble

settling on a form that satisfied him. The middle version, from 1937, is actually worth hearing because it contains an entire movement not in the final version (performed in the video link above). For a full discussion, [here](#) is a post about it on our website.

(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions](#) to this Second Edition.)

## Samuel Barber – **NEW TO THIS EDITION**

Serenade for string quartet, Op. 1 (1928)

[Listen on Spotify: I. Un poco adagio - Allegro con spirito](#)

[Listen on Spotify: II. Andante con moto](#)

[Listen on Spotify: III. Dance \(Allegro giocoso\)](#)

Performed by Endellion String Quartet

The Serenade is one of Barber's first mature works, and this and his famous Op. 11 are his only compositions for string quartet. When the composer Sidney Homer heard the Serenade, he wrote to Barber, "I am amazed at what you have accomplished ... this is astonishing ... it seems you are going to skip 'youth' and jump straight into the maelstrom and complexities of a mature man." Like the *Adagio for Strings*, it's nowadays heard more often in a version for orchestral strings, which Barber made in 1942.

(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions](#) to this Second Edition.)

## Kurt Weill (1900-1950) – **NEW TO THIS EDITION**

String Quartet, Op. 8 (1923)

[Listen on Spotify: I. Introduktion](#)

[Listen on Spotify: II. Scherzo](#)

[Listen on Spotify: III. Choralphantasie](#)

Kurt Weill left 2 whole string quartets, written in 1918 and 1923 respectively, as well as two single movements that originally belonged to the second quartet. The Kurt Weill Foundation to its credit has made all the sheet music to all the quartets easily obtainable, but this second quartet, Op. 8, is the only one that's ever played. It was premiered by the Paul Hindemith's Amar

Quartet, then championed by the Roth Quartet which performed it in Paris and throughout Spain. On the basis of this work, Busoni recommended Weill to the publisher Universal Edition.

(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions to this Second Edition.](#))

## **George Enescu (1881–1955)**

String Quartet No. 2 (1951)

[Molto moderato \(1st movt\)](#)

[Andante molto sostenuto ed espressivo \(2nd movt\)](#)

[allegretto non troppo mosso \(3rd movt\)](#)

[Allegretto moderato \(4th movt\)](#)

Played by Voces Quartet

A masterly work, perhaps requiring a couple of encounters before its beauty is revealed. Both quartets by Enescu deserve many more performances (he considered them companion works though written over 30 years apart). His two string quartets are No. 1 in E ♭ (1916-20) and No. 2 in G (1951)

## **Nikolai Myaskovsky (1881–1950)**

String Quartet No. 13 in A minor (1949)

[Complete](#)

Played by Borodin Quartet

A positively delightful work, though the Soviet authorities did sometimes denounce him for modernism. Myaskovsky is sometimes called the 'father' of the Soviet symphony, paving the way for the likes of Shostakovich and Prokofiev. He wrote thirteen quartets (1907–1949).

## **Nikolai Roslavets (1881–1944)**

String Quartet No. 3 (1920)

[Preview and purchase album on iTunes](#)

Played by Novosibirsk Philharmonic Quartet

This is an imaginative, modern quartet by a Russian composer whose reputation is increasingly rehabilitated. He too met with regular Soviet denunciation, to the point where he acceded and wrote some terrible sing-along music for public consumption. Roslavets wrote five string quartets (1913, 1915, 1920, 1929–31, 1942).

## **Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967)**

String Quartet No. 1 (1908)

[Andante poco rubato – allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by Noah Jenkins, Michael Weiland, violins; Avery Pratt, viola; River Ramuglia, cello

A very energetic quartet full of surprises. The sophisticated Kodály was also a folksong collector, like his Hungarian compatriot Bartók. He wrote two string quartets (1908 and 1917)

## **Artur Schnabel (1882–1951)**

String Quartet No. 4 (1924)

[Molto moderato \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by A New York City Freelance Quartet

Though famous as an interpreter of the classical period's composers like Beethoven and Schubert, as a composer Schnabel was an admirer and friend of Schoenberg's. This is a fascinating, very listenable quartet despite its modernity. Schnabel wrote five string quartets (1918–1940)

## **Joaquín Turina (1882–1949)**

La Oración del Torero (1925)

[Complete](#)

Played by Liverpool String Quartet

This French Impressionist-inspired Spanish work could soon be disqualified from being considered a forgotten string quartet. It seems to be appearing more often on the concert platform. Turina also wrote an early quartet, Op. 4 (1911).

## **Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937)**

String Quartet No. 2 (1927)

[Complete](#)

Played by Belcea Quartet

This great piece also verges on being dropped off the list of forgotten string quartets, as it does get played with more frequency, despite its enormous difficulty for performers. Szymanowski wrote two string quartets, No. 1, Op. 37 in C major (1917) and No. 2, Op. 56 (1927)

## **Arnold Bax (1883–1953)**

String Quartet No. 3 (1936)

[Preview and purchase the album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Maggini Quartet

A very fine quartet from an English composer besotted with all things Irish. Bax wrote three string quartets: No. 1 in G major (1918), No. 2 in E minor (1925), No. 3 in F major (1936).

## **Egon Wellesz (1885–1974)**

String Quartet No. 6 (1946)

[Grave – Comodo \(1st movt\)](#)

[Allegretto \(2nd movt\)](#)

[Andante, molto tranquilo \(3rd movt\)](#)

[Poco animato – Grazioso \(4th movt\)](#)

Played by Artis Quartet

Wellesz is really only known as an early biographer of Schoenberg, but he was a fine composer himself (and got himself a publishing deal earlier than his fellow students Webern and Berg, much to Schoenberg's surprise). This quartet may seem difficult to listen to initially, but there's something compelling about it. Wellesz wrote nine string quartets, from 1911 to 1966.

## **Kurt Atterberg (1887–1974)**

String Quartet No. 2 (1918)

[Preview and purchase the album on ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Garaguly Quartet

Another example of a once-famous, now neglected composer, this Swede wrote three string quartets, but only one, No. 2 in B minor, is available on recording. As a bit of trivia, he was simultaneously trained as a composer and as an electrical engineer, and was head of patent registration in Sweden for the last 30 years of his life.

## **Ernst Toch (1887–1964)**

String Quartet No. 12 (1946)

[Preview and purchase the album on ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Zurich String Quartet

Toch was one of many composers who fled Germany for America during the Nazi years. Perhaps as an antidote to his film music, his chamber music is quite learned. This quartet is not unlike the Egon Wellesz from the same year. Toch wrote 8 surviving string quartets (early ones are lost), plus a *Dedication* for string quartet.

## **Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)**

String Quartet No. 9 (1947)

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

Played by Danubius Quartet

This great work is quite acerbic and will be a surprise to anyone who only knows Villa Lobos as the popular composer of the *Bachianas Brasileiras*. Very prolific in the genre, Villa Lobos wrote 17 string quartets between 1915 and 1957.

## **Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959)**

String Quartet No. 7 (1947)

### [Andante \(2nd movt\)](#)

Played by Skampa Quartet

Considering how hugely prolific he was, it's understandable if some of Martinů's music is awaiting discovery. This quartet should be heard if only for the almost Baroque lyricism of the slow movement. Martinů wrote 8 surviving string quartets and a piece called *Tři jezdci* (Three Horsemen, 1902).

### **Arthur Bliss (1891–1975)**

String Quartet No. 1 in B ♭ (1914)

#### [Complete](#)

Played by Maggini Quartet

This is officially 'No. 1', though Bliss had written two earlier quartets. In it, Bliss returned to a more melodic style following a youthful modernist phase. Bliss wrote four string quartets: A major (1914); (1923); No. 1 in B-flat (1941); No. 2 (1950).

### **Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)**

String Quartet No. 1 (1930)

#### [Allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by the Russian String Quartet

You can hear Prokofiev's characteristic tuneful angularity right away. This is a very captivating, attractive work. Prokofiev wrote two string quartets (1930 and 1941).

### **Arthur Honegger (1892–1955)**

String Quartet No. 3 (1937)

#### [Preview and purchase album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Ludwig Quartet

A very enjoyable, though somewhat subtle French quartet. This Swiss-born member of the great French collective Les Six is most well-known for *Pacific 231*, an orchestral work imitating locomotive sounds. Honegger wrote three

string quartets, in C minor (1917), D major (1936), and E major (1937).

## **Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)**

String Quartets Nos 14 & 15

[Short Excerpt](#)

Played by musicians at Risør Festival of Chamber Music 2011

This is an infamous work that is almost never heard. In a tour de force of contrapuntal mastery, Milhaud wrote his 14th and 15th string quartets to be played either as quartets or simultaneously as an octet. The interesting aspect about this performance from Risør is that the players group themselves into two discrete string quartets, not an octet. Including this, Milhaud wrote eighteen string quartets.

## **Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983)**

String Quartet (1917-19)

[Final \(3rd movt; partial\)](#)

Played by Porter String Quartet

The only woman member of Les Six wrote a single very French-sounding, highly polished string quartet.

## **Paul Dessau (1894–1979)**

Seven Movements for String Quartet (String Quartet No. 6; 1974)

[Complete](#)

Played by unknown ensemble

Dessau's interesting chamber music can sometimes remind you of Webern, but with longer note values. He was one of the Jewish composers who left Germany for the US and wrote film music, but unlike most he returned to Germany after the war. He wrote seven string quartets from 1943 to 1975.

## **Ernest John Moeran (1894–1950)**



String Quartet No. 1 in A minor (1921)

[Complete](#)

Played by Maggini Quartet

Almost everything about this fine British composer is forgotten today. If you wish Vaughan William wrote more string quartets, listen to this. Moeran wrote two string quartets (in A minor and in E-flat major)

## **Walter Piston (1894–1976)**

String Quartet No. 1 (1933)

[Allegro vivace \(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by Harlem Quartet

A superb American composer only really known nowadays for his textbooks on orchestration and counterpoint, Piston is a great example of how a conservative style still yields beautiful music. He wrote five string quartets (from 1933 to 1962).

## **Erwin Schulhoff (1894–1942)**

String Quartet No. 1 (1924)

[Alla Slovacca \(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by Aviv String Quartet

This wonderful composer had his career cut short by the mere fact of being Jewish. Schulhoff died of tuberculosis at the Wülzburg concentration camp. He wrote two numbered string quartets (1924, 1925), one unnumbered quartet (1918), and several small quartet pieces.

## **Paul Hindemith (1895–1963)**

String Quartet No.5 (1923)

[Lebhaftes Halbe \(1st movt\)](#)

[Sehr langsam \(2nd movt\)](#)

[Kleiner Marsch – Passacaglia – Fugato \(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by the Danish Quartet

Hindemith's 5th quartet is a fantastic alternative for anyone who likes Shostakovich. This very gifted composer was very prolific, but only wrote seven string quartets.

## **Nikos Skalkottas (1904-1949) – NEW TO THIS EDITION**

String Quartet No. 4 (1940)

[Complete \(playlist of 5 videos\)](#)

Performed by New Hellenic Quartet

[Listen on Spotify: I. Allegro Molto Vivace](#)

[Listen on Spotify II. Thema Con Variazioni: Andante Molto Espressivo](#)

[Listen on Spotify: III. Scherzo: Presto - Ein Wenig Langsamer](#)

[Listen on Spotify: IV. Allegro Giusto - E Ben Ritmato](#)

←He never quite achieved success during his lifetime, but Skalkottas is enjoying several posthumous champions, including the influential BIS record label. Born in Greece, he studied and lived in Berlin and became part of Schoenberg's circle. Schoenberg thought very highly of Skalkottas, though at some point they had a permanent disagreement. Skalkottas' returned to Athens in 1933, and had very few performances as German-occupied Greece was unsympathetic to his atonal music. He wrote four numbered string quartets (the second is lost) as well as *Gero Dimos* for string quartet (1949). This lengthy and expressive fourth quartet (1940) is recommended for anyone who loves Berg's quartet works.

←

(For your convenience, [click here to return to the list of new additions](#) to this Second Edition.)

## **Virgil Thomson (1896–1989)**

String Quartet No. 2 (1932)

[Allegro moderato & Tempo di Valzer \(1st and 2nd movts\)](#)

[Adagio sostenuto & Allegretto \(3rd and 4th movts\)](#)

Played by Juilliard Quartet

This Pulitzer Prize winning American composer's works often sound French because of his years as a student there, under the legendary Nadia Boulanger.

He wrote two string quartets in quick succession (1931 and 1932), and the slow movement of the second quartet is particularly beautiful.

## **Henry Cowell (1897–1965)**

Mosaic Quartet (String Quartet No. 3, 1935)

[A performance](#)

Played by Colorado String Quartet

Cowell was a friend of Charles Ives and in some ways even more experimental. One of his major chamber pieces, the Mosaic Quartet is scored as a collection of five movements with no preordained sequence. The above is one version of a performance. There's an undeniable allure to the piece. He wrote five numbered quartets in total, plus some miniatures.

## **Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897–1957)**

String Quartet No. 3 in D major, Op. 34

[Sostenuto \(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by Doric Quartet

Korngold needs no introduction to film music buffs nor violin concerto listeners. He wrote three string quartets, Op. 16 in A (1923), Op. 26 in E ♭ (1933), Op. 34 in D (1945) – this last is a breathtakingly beautiful work.

## **Quincy Porter (1897–1966)**

Our Lady of Potchaiv (1923)

[Preview and purchase album from ClassicsOnline](#)

Complete String Quartets played by Potomac String Quartet

This influential teacher founded the American Music Center with Aaron Copland and Howard Hanson. He wrote nine quartets between 1922 and 1958, and also some attractive miniatures, of which this is one.

## **Alexandre Tansman (1897–1986)**

Triptyque

## [Purchase and purchase from ClassicsOnline](#)

Played by Elysee Quartet

There are very few recordings of this extremely fine Polish-French composer who was very famous in his time, touring frequently. He is still known to guitarists for the works he wrote for Andrés Segovia. He wrote much chamber music including nine quartets.

## **Viktor Ullmann (1898–1944)**

String Quartet No. 3, Op. 46 (1943)

### [Part I](#)

### [Part 2](#)

Played by Movses Pogossian and Radu Paponiu, violins; Ningning Jin, viola; James Kang, cello.

This is an extremely beautiful work well worth discovering. Like Schulhoff before and the following two composers we are considering, Ullman was imprisoned by Nazis for being Jewish and killed in Auschwitz.

## **Pavel Haas (1899–1944)**

String Quartet No.2 “From the Monkey Mountains” (1925)

### [Landscape \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by Pavel Haas Quartet

Haas’s most famous works are indeed his three string quartets from 1920 to 1938. He is known to some musical children as the composer of *Brundibar*, a children’s theatre work written while he was in the concentration camp of Auschwitz, where he was killed.

## **Hans Krása (1899–1944)**

### [Theme With Variations \(1936\)](#)

### **Complete**

Played by Meiravi Quartet

This very attractive piece makes you lament even more the killing of this

Czech composer in Auschwitz. Krása wrote one full string quartet (1921) as well.

## **Silvestre Revueltas (1899–1940)**

String Quartet No.2 “Magueyes” (1931)

[Complete](#)

Played by the Latin-American Quartet

This quartet from the great Mexican composer Revueltas shows his typically lively, rhythmic music. He wrote four quartets in the space of 2 years (1931-2)

## **George Antheil (1900–1959)**

String Quartet No.2 (1927)

[Complete](#)

Played by Mondriaan Quartet

Antheil was an experimental composer who was also an electronics inventor who wrote three quartets (1925, 1927, 1948), plus other smaller pieces. This appealing 2nd quartet is dedicated to his landlady in Paris, the famous bookseller Sylvia Beach who supported so many authors.

## **Aaron Copland (1900–1990)**

Two Pieces for String Quartet (1923/1928)

[Lento and Rondino](#)

Kohon Quartet

The quintessential popular American composer Aaron Copland wrote very little for string quartet – just four exquisite miniatures throughout the 1920s. They are often played together.

## **Ernst Krenek (1900–1991)**

String Quartet No.4 (1924)

### [Allegro moderato \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by Sonore Quartet

One of the first mature works from this fascinating composer who embraced atonality, jazz and cabaret alike. This is a very good work, and will appeal if you like Shostakovich. Krenek wrote eight quartets in total.

## **Ruth Crawford Seeger (1901–1953)**

String Quartet (1931)

[1st and 2nd movts](#)

[3rd and 4th movts](#)

Played by Marjike van Kooten e Heleen Hulst, violins

Karin Dolman, viola

Hans Woudenberg, cello

Ruth Crawford Seeger was a highly experimental composer who was also influenced by folk music. Her excellent quartet is a lyrical 12-tone work.

## **Edmund Rubbra (1901–1986)**

String Quartet No. 4 (1975-77)

[Complete](#)

Played by Dante Quartet

This British composer is best known as a symphonist, but he wrote four string quartets. His 4<sup>th</sup> is a memorial to a friend who died young. The quartets are No. 1 in F minor, Op. 35, 1933 revised 1946; No. 2 in E-flat, Op. 73, 1951; No. 3, Op. 112, 1963; No. 4, Op. 150, 1977.

## **George Rochberg (1918–2005)**

String Quartet No. 6 (1978)

[Variations on Pachelbel \(3rd movt\)](#)

Played by Concord String Quartet

Rochberg was the first American composer to publicly turn from atonal music to tonal music, brought about by the death of his son. He wrote seven

quartets; the sixth quartet includes a set of heartfelt variations on Pachelbel's Canon.

## **Leon Kirchner (1919–2009)**

String Quartet No.2

[Adagio \(2nd movt\)](#)

Played by Orion Quartet

One of Schoenberg's Californian students, Kirchner did not adopt 12-tone composition but was influenced by Schoenberg's general lyrical esthetic. He wrote four (1949, 1958, 1967, 2007); the third, which includes a pre-recorded part, won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1967.

## **Mieczysław Weinberg (1919–1996)**

String Quartet No. 16 A-flat minor, Op. 130

[Allegro \(1st movt\)](#)

Played by Danel Quartet

A great Soviet composer who might have been as famous as Prokofiev and Shostakovich were it not for his being Jewish in Stalinist Russia. He and his greatest supporter Shostakovich lived near each other and spoke almost every day. In an incredible act of belief, the Quatuor Danel has recorded all 17 of his quartets (1937-1987).

## **Pierre Boulez (born 1925)**

Livre pour quatuor (1949)

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 3](#)

Played by Parrenin Quartet

One of the seminal figures in mid-20th century music, Boulez wrote only one string quartet – *Livre pour quatuor* (1949) or “Book for Quartet”, then withdrew it, later recasting only parts of it as the orchestral *Livre pour cordes* (Book for Strings). The composer literally wanted this to be a forgotten string quartet.

But when the great Arditti Quartet asked Boulez in 1985 if they could play it, he consented, and after their performance, he made it generally available. It ranks as possibly the most difficult quartet of the 20th century.