



LEONE SINIGAGLIA

Complete Works for String Quartet · 1

String Quartet

Variations on a Theme of Brahms · Hora Mystica

ARCHOS QUARTET

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Leone
SINIGAGLIA
(1868–1944)

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1	Concert-Étude in D major, Op. 5 (pub. c. 1901).....	6:21
	Zwei Characterstücke, Op. 35 (version for string quartet) (pub. 1910)	9:11
2	Regenlied ('Rain Song')	4:23
3	Étude-caprice.....	4:48
	Variations on a Theme of Brahms, Op. 22 (1901)	9:52
4	Theme	0:36
5	Variation 1	0:33
6	Variation 2: Con eleganza	0:30
7	Variation 3: Andantino mosso.....	0:42
8	Variation 4: Con fuoco	0:21
9	Variation 5: Allegro comodo	0:24
10	Variation 6: Alla Mazurka	0:20
11	Variation 7: Un poco agitato	0:25
12	Variation 8: Andantino mosso	0:31
13	Variation 9: Molto espressivo, con moto	0:34
14	Variation 10: Vivacissimo	0:21
15	Variation 11: Andante mesto	0:38
16	Variation 12: Allegretto animato e grazioso	0:16
17	Variation 13: Andantino mosso	0:35
18	Variation 14: Grave e passionato	0:39
19	Variation 15: Agitato ed impetuoso	0:19
20	Variation 16: Finale: Lo stesso tempo	2:06

21	Scherzo, Op. 8 (1892).....	3:32
22	Hora Mystica (1890).....	2:49
	String Quartet in D major, Op. 27 (1902)	32:17
23	I. Allegro comodo	9:04
24	II. Scherzo: Allegro vivo	7:08
25	III. Adagio non troppo.....	8:36
26	IV. Allegro con spirito	7:29

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Filip Jeska, Violin I · Mikołaj Pokora, Violin II
Radenko Kostadinov, Viola · Francesca Fiore, Cello

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Leone SINIGAGLIA (1868–1944) Complete Works for String Quartet · 1

Leone Sinigaglia (1868–1944) is surely a unique figure in history, in that he was renowned not only as a composer, but as a mountaineer. He was born in Turin, and studied at the conservatoire there with composer and violinist Giovanni Bolzoni (1841–1919). His predilection for mountaineering led him to spend many holidays in Cavourto, to the southeast of his native city, a place that not only gave him the opportunity to exercise his climbing skills, but inspired him creatively.¹ He later travelled in Europe, spending time in Vienna from 1894 (where he knew Brahms) and in Prague from 1900 (where he met Dvořák). In 1901 he returned to Turin, where he began to make large numbers of arrangements of folk songs, whose great success was initiated by the publication by Breitkopf & Härtel of the six volumes of *Vecchie Canzoni popolari del Piemonte*, Op. 40, published between 1914 and 1927.

Sinigaglia's death was tragic. In 1944, at the age of 75, he was to be deported to a concentration camp in Germany, on account of his Jewish origins. Two SS soldiers appeared at the hospital where he had been persuaded to go by a friend, with his sister. He suffered a heart attack at the very moment of his arrest, however, and died instantaneously. His sister died some days later.

As this recording eloquently demonstrates, Sinigaglia did not spend his time harmonising folk songs exclusively. He produced a fascinating series of chamber music, including the works for string quartet that make up this anthology. The *Concert-Étude*, Op. 5, was written during his time in Prague, and first published there. It was written for the Bohemian Quartet (one of whose founders was Josef Suk) and is indeed the concert study that its name suggests, but it is far from an academic exercise, developing as it does from its modest opening into a work of flowing lyricism and exuberant energy.

The *Zwei Characterstücke*, Op. 35 ('Two Characteristic Pieces') were published in 1910. The first is entitled *Regenlied* ('Rain Song'), and the second *Étude-caprice*. Brief though they are, they also demonstrate Sinigaglia's fluid melodic writing and lightness of touch. The earlier *Variations on a Theme of Brahms*, Op. 22 is altogether a more substantial work, and was taken up by both the Quartetto Bolognese and the Bohemian Quartet, becoming well known in various

¹ There is an entire chapter devoted to Sinigaglia's work as a mountaineer in Gianluca La Villa and Annalisa Lo Piccolo, *Leone Sinigaglia*, Verona: Gabrielli Editori, 2012.

European countries by virtue of their busy touring schedule. It is a work in 16 brief sections, showing the dazzling array of technical devices at the composer's disposal but never losing sight of the character of the original theme. The variations are by turns dreamy, dance-like, reflective and sombre, and it is easy to see how Sinigaglia's grasp of the character piece, which is essentially what they are, resulted in a work of such rich variety and made it so successful.

The brief but very beautiful *Scherzo*, Op. 8 (1892) was first published in 1898, and thus during Sinigaglia's Viennese period, but it already shows all the gifts that came to fruition in the *Variations*, on a miniature scale, exploring a wide range of timbres and techniques and achieving in a little under four minutes a whole microscopic universe: a world in a grain of sand, to quote William Blake. *Hora Mystica* (1890) is even shorter. It was dedicated to the sculptor Leonardo Bistolfi, a family friend. It is characterised, as the musicologist Annalisa Lo Piccolo has noted, 'by translucent and delicate atmospheres, in which from the superimposition of the melodic lines, especially in the central episode, there arises an unsettling harmonic oscillation, which is resolved with the return of the smooth opening motif.'²

This collection of Leone Sinigaglia's music for string quartet ends with the *String Quartet in D major*, Op. 27 (1902). It has four movements: *Allegro comodo*; *Scherzo: Allegro vivo*; *Adagio non troppo* and *Allegro con spirito*. It is a distillation of the composer's natural Italian lyricism in combination with the thorough-going technical mastery he had learned in Vienna and Prague. The most striking movement is perhaps the second, whose unexpected rhythmic turns create an effect of fascinating unpredictability. The third movement is a set of variations, but of a reflective quality very different from the Brahms set, and the fourth is a romp of great rhythmic agility and considerable chromaticism.

While Sinigaglia's voice is not that of a composer of works of great dimensions, he was also not only a miniaturist, as the *String Quartet* shows clearly. As a mountaineer who wrote about his achievements in that field, so also as a composer he knew how to convey majesty, grandeur and depth with elegance and concision.

Ivan Moody

² Gianluca La Villa and Annalisa Lo Piccolo, *Leone Sinigaglia*..., p. 88 (translation by the present author).



Photo: © Peter Adamik

Archos Quartet

The Archos Quartet is a young, multinational string quartet founded in 2009 at the Musikhochschule Lübeck. After completing their studies in Stuttgart with Gerhard Schulz (Alban Berg Quartett), Peter Buck (Melos Quartet) and members of the Vogler Quartet, the members of the Archos Quartet are currently pursuing Meisterklassenexamen degrees at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Leipzig with Franck Reinecke and Anne-Christin Schwarz. In 2011 they were artists-in-residence at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation and during 2013–14 were awarded a Guildhall Artists Fellowship from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where they received training from Levon Chilingirian and members of the Belcea Quartet. The Quartet has also received coaching from many eminent musicians such as Eberhard Feltz, Shmuel Ashkenasi, Christiane Edinger, Sandro Meo, Paul Cortese, Bruno Giuranna, Eszter Haffner, Yair Kless, Milan Škampa, the Casals, Endellion, Fine Arts, Hagen, Takács, Chilingirian and Sirius Quartets, and members of Voces Intimae. Professional engagements have included performing at the Barbican Centre, and at the Salzburg, Il Settecento Musicale a Lucca, Ferrara Musica and Lake District Summer Music festivals. The Quartet has received many scholarships from foundations such as the DAAD Stipendium, Péter Horváth-Stiftung, the Rotary Club, Live Music Now (founded by Yehudi Menuhin) and DOMS-Stiftung, Basel. The ensemble has been awarded prizes at the Val Tidone International Chamber Music Competition and the Luigi Boccherini International Competition in Lucca, where they also won the Adolfo Betti Prize for best string quartet.

www.archosquartet.com

The renowned Italian composer and mountaineer Leone Sinigaglia wrote a fascinating series of pieces for string quartet that reflect his powers of characterisation and elegance. Flowing melodies can be heard throughout, not least in the *Concert-Étude, Op. 5*, while the more substantial *Variations on a Theme of Brahms, Op. 22* display his technical skill and expressive variety, whether reflective, sombre or exuberant. His *String Quartet in D major, Op. 27* exemplifies his dual inheritance: a commanding central European facility, combined with a natural Italian lyricism.

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Playing Time
64:26

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A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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