

Rare Jewels From the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players

New York Sun By FRED KIRSHNIT

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If you Google the composer Vincenzo Gambaro, the search engine attempts to redirect you to Vincenzo Gambino, a Milanese doctor who has apparently discovered a miraculous cure for baldness. This gambit is understandable, as there is considerable doubt about the existence of Gambaro. His chimerical qualities, however, have not deterred the intrepid explorers of the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, who presented his Quatuor Concertant for Four Winds as part of an excellent concert at the Church For All Nations on Monday evening.

Every summer, the players abandon their digs at the Church of the Good Shepherd, the only survivor of the renovation that created Lincoln Center, and hit the road for an air-conditioned environment. This season, the venue is three blocks west of Carnegie Hall.

So who is Vincenzo Gambaro? Is he a P.D.Q. Bach character, an invention, a fiction? The best historical guess is that he is the nom de plume of clarinetist and composer Giovanni Battista Gambaro, an Italian living in Paris in the early 19th century, whose specialties included a lot of music for military bands. **Judging from this example, his music is lively, fresh, brash, and appealing. The quartet (Barry Crawford, flute, Vadim Lando, clarinet, Karl Kramer-Johansen, horn, and Gina Cuffari, bassoon) was especially adept at bringing out the élan vital and, even more challenging, the humor of this piece. Good spirit abounded and interplay was remarkably precise. As a companion piece, the group — minus the horn — presented another rollicking work for winds, the Trio in G Major, Op. 47, No. 2 by Ignace Pleyel, a very well-known figure in Paris — the newly refurbished Salle Pleyel is roughly the equivalent of our Carnegie Hall — but certainly underplayed in America.**

What do Bela Bartok, Zoltan Kodaly, Ernst von Dohnanyi, Leo Weiner, and Emmerich Kalman have in common? They all had the same composition teacher, a German named Hans Koessler who held sway at what is now called the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest. The featured work of the evening was his String Sextet in F Minor.

Written in 1902, this piece of dripping Romanticism is really a full symphony for chamber group. **The ensemble (Misha Keylin and Lisa Shihoten, violins, Robert Meyer and Kathryn Lockwood, violas, and Ani Aznavoorian and Caroline Stinson, cellos) presented it with an expansive sense of scope, big gestures, and superb blending. Every player had an opportunity to shine, as Koessler occasionally gives the melody to the second viola and thematic introductions to the second violin.** A cousin of Max Reger, Koessler sometimes emulates his relative's thick chamber textures, but the composer who kept coming to mind was the Arnold Schoenberg of "Transfigured Night," realized just three years earlier in 1899. True, Koessler colors only inside the lines, but his sense of the febrile



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and his expertise in sonority elevates this piece to significant heights. **Every now and then, a rarity in concert can inspire further study. I would certainly want to experience more of Koessler after hearing such a white-hot reading.**

The familiar was also represented with a lovely flute quintet of Boccherini and the Adagio and Menuetto in B Flat Major, K. 266 of Mozart. The former was sprightly and warm, but the latter suffered from too quick a tempo. The Adagio was hurried to the point of a loss of elasticity, as if it were a tossed off middle section in a Baroque piece rather than a profound standalone work of Mozart, while the dance was hardly danceable at this advanced rate of speed. But this night, the rarities glittered like jewels.