The PRO ARTE QUARTET

A CENTURY OF MUSICAL ADVENTURE ON TWO CONTINENTS

John W. Barker

The Pro Arte Quartet

Robert Maas, Germaine Prévost, Laurent Halleux, and Alphonse Onnou. Listening to a Quatuor Pro Arte recording. Courtesy of the Tully Potter Collection.

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This book is dedicated to the twenty-seven musicians who have served in the quartet over a century.

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PREFACE

A centennial naturally invites celebration. The centennial of a string quartet, however, is an unprecedented occasion for celebration. The survival of any quartet for any length of time requires a very special chemistry that allows the fusion of four distinctly musical personalities into a transcendent, coherent entity. And it also requires the submission of individual careers to the interests of full-time ensemble playing. Finally, it requires the flexibility to assimilate new members as personnel changes take place.

Many quartets have endured for years, even decades. The replacement of any one member by a newer one inevitably requires adjustment and rededication. Some quartets have survived even recurrent turnovers in membership. But only one string quartet has managed to survive not only membership changes but also further crises, challenges, and transformations, to endure as a continuously active ensemble, under the same name, for a full century. That is the ensemble that began in Brussels, Belgium, as the Quatuor Pro Arte and continues to this day as the Pro Arte Quartet, based in its home in the School of Music of the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Justifiably, that home institution generated a prolonged celebration of the centennial, in the years 2012–14, featuring concerts and the commissioning of new works. The crowning episode was a return-to-roots tour of the original homeland, Belgium, in the spring of 2014. This book represents a final contribution to the celebration.

My involvement in that final project was the work of Sarah Schaffer, the quartet's manager. She chaired superbly the advisory committee that planned the centennial and on which I myself served. Sarah has been a mentor, collaborator, and inspiration to me in this prolonged project, from its conception to its realization. She carefully and painstakingly read through a preliminary draft of the book, giving excellent advice; and she has given invaluable help in assembling the illustrations. Accordingly, I must give her much of the credit for what is good in the resulting volume, and absolve her from any if its faults or failings.

As a scholar of the history of centuries long past, I am not used to dealing with living descendants of, or participants in, the actual life of such an organization as the Pro Arte Quartet. I must therefore acknowledge forthwith the help, advice, and encouragement I have received from the present members of the ensemble: David Perry, Suzanne Beia, Sally Chisholm, and Parry Karp. Mr. Karp in particular, as the member of longest service in the quartet's history, has been particularly valuable as a consultant.

I owe great debts to several past members, such as Norman Paulu and Richard Blum. But two of these in particular have been special benefactors: Lowell Creitz and Martha Francis Blum.

For the many decades of the quartet's residence in Madison, the maintenance of files and records on its activities has been very inconsistent. The first continuing manager of the group, Helene Stratman Blotz, conscientiously collected the quartet's concert programs. That practice lapsed badly in subsequent hands, but Creitz was extraordinarily diligent in keeping a steady log of his performances, in and beyond the quartet. He has been most generous in giving me access to this log, which is an indispensable source for the years 1955–76. After him, less diligence was displayed, and the simple filings of programs has been patchy (though Parry Karp and David Perry have kept their own files of programs).

In Martha Blum I have a most important predecessor. A lively observer, as well as a fine musician, after her retirement from the quartet, she undertook to research and write its history. With institutional financial support, she set to work on what would commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the quartet's establishment in Madison. She interviewed appropriate people (both here and abroad) and did extensive study of the correspondence of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. She poured so much of the results into drafts meant for a full-scale volume. Alas, the ultimate outcome was a reduction into a thirty-nine-page digest that was combined with an anniversary commemoration of the Music School's wind quintet. But, in all these forms, her devoted work has provided me with much inspiration and substance.

More recently, I have become acquainted with the work of the Belgian scholar Anne Van Malderen. For her monumental doctoral dissertation (Université Catholique de Louvain, 2012), she did extraordinarily extensive research on the history of the quartet in its Belgian identity (1912–47) and produced a rich historical and analytical study. As she was writing it, she graciously supplied me with advance copies

of her monumental dissertation. In my treatment of those years, I have depended heavily, and gratefully, on her work.

Not one of my own direct contacts, but an early resource for all who study the Pro Arte Quartet is a remarkable set of recollections by the longest-surviving member of the original Belgian foursome, Germain Prevost. These were captured on audiotape in a remarkable interview with him, conducted in San Francisco by Norman and Cathy Paulu in 1979. Together with a CBC film they made with him two years earlier in Vancouver, BC, Prevost's personal reflections bring the quartet's early history vividly to life. The University of Wisconsin's archives also contain interviews and testimonials, including recollections by another of the quartet's violists, Bernard Milofsky, that have been vital to this project.

I owe a great personal debt to Tully Potter, one of the world's leading experts in the history of recorded music. I have found particular inspiration in his magisterial biography, *Adolf Busch: The Life of an Honest Musician* (2010). A stimulating contact person of great patience and generosity as well as wit, he has been of essential help in formulating the discography in appendix E, and in assisting with the illustrations.

Among others I must acknowledge with special thanks are Jeanette Casey and Tom Caw of the Mills Music Library and David Null of the University of Wisconsin Archives, for their generous aid in giving me access to their collections. Further thanks are due to Susan Halpert of the Houghton Library at Harvard University. Thanks are also due to Robert Graebner, for assistance with photography and program files.

Added to all these must be my wife, Margaret, for her regular helpfulness in a number of ways—including reading and commenting upon the manuscript.

I must, however, express my concerns about a procedural decision I have had to make. As a professional scholar, I have been raised with sworn allegiance to the note, foot- or end-. For a book such as this, however, aimed at both a specialized and general readership, I have had to hesitate. Extensive notes would add gravely to the length of the book. More crucially, a great deal of serious citational apparatus would be impossible to follow, given the character of so much of the source material involved. These are conversations, notes, unofficial files with no systematic organization, and even archival files with little in the way of numbering and placement that could be referred to with any meaning. A good deal of the useful material remains in chaotic files stored in cartons, many residing temporarily on desks and floors. Where

specific kinds of material (letters, reviews, etc.) are referred to, I have tried to give minimal identification within the text, in the hope that readers might derive some guidance to them. I list below the major sources I have used, which may also provide some guidance to readers interested in delving into them.

An ex post facto resolution of the foregoing solution would be the gathering together of as much as possible of all this unsecured material, together with already archived materials, into a comprehensive Pro Arte archive that would be accessible to future researchers. Such a venture is now under consideration, and may eventually be housed in the Mills Music Library at the University of Wisconsin's Memorial Library, though not for some time, given the requirements of space, personnel, and financing, elements that are increasingly scarce these days.

Given the mazes and complexities of resources drawn upon for this book, it is inevitable that some mistakes or inaccuracies have been committed. For these I must apologize. I can only hope that the broad picture I have tried to give will alert music lovers to the remarkable history of this historic ensemble. I might add that the century-long story of a string quartet poses challenges as to what material to include, what to leave out, and how to organize what is assembled. Readers may find that my structural pattern, chapter by chapter, produces endless processions of data about performances and repertoire. But a quartet is a performing group: performing is what it is about—where and when and what. A simplistic anecdotal approach hardly does justice to the realities of its life. I hope, therefore, that a clear setting forth of so much of the available data will give the reader insights into the day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month, year-by-year realities of the quartet's busy life over the course of a century, as well as helping future researchers.

A comment is due on the photographs assembled as visual documentation of the quartet's membership. Over the course of the century, one may reckon twenty-three different configurations of membership, as the personnel changed over a century. It is not possible to document visually every one of those configurations, but the images assembled do present eighteen of the twenty-three. More to the point, those eighteen manage to include all of the individual players who have played with the quartet, with only two exceptions—the original cellist, Lemaire, and the short-term substitute violinist Won Mo Kim.

For help in securing these images, I am indebted to many, including Robert Graebner, Tully Potter (and his assistant, Richard Burch),

and Anne Van Malderen. Particularly helpful have been Sarah Schaffer, and Marina Menendez of the Distillery Studio. Special thanks must go to David Null's diligent assistant Catherine H. Phan and, again, to Jeanette Casey of the University of Wisconsin Mills Library.

A word as to treatment of our quartet's name. It was formulated in French, of course, as the Quatuor Pro Arte. It was identified thus in its initial years of operation. But with international exposure, and especially in its involvements with English-language venues, audiences, and managements, it readily adopted the parallel name of the Pro Arte Quartet. Thus, the name in either language is usable for the group up to 1940. The group's label became bilingual even before it made the transition from a French-speaking base to an English-speaking one. I have tried to honor the original Belgian identity in my own uses in the book, but after the transition, the Anglo-American form inevitably comes to triumph. Additionally, at times I have resorted to the abbreviations of QPA and PAQ, as convenient. I add that I have subtly varied the spelling of violist Germain Prévost's name, using the accented form of his surname during the account of his QPA years, but dropping that for the time after he had settled in the United States.

Basic Sources

- Correspondence, conversations, and interviews with a number of people, drawn extensively upon their recollections or information. These people include: Suzanne Beia, Martha and Richard Blum, Patrick Chatelin (grandson of Georges Charbonneaux), Sally Chisholm, Susan Cook, Lowell Creitz, Walter Gray, Bonnie Hampton, Rose Mary Harbison, Parry Karp, Norman Paulu, David Perry, and Tully Potter.
- Archives of the University of Wisconsin, and of the University's School of Music (in Mills Music Library).
- Archival files, mainly kept by Helene Stratman Blotz, presently held by Parry Karp.
- Martha Blum's article, "The Pro Arte Quartet: 50 Years" (in the publication cited in the bibliography), and her drafts and papers (Mills Library).
- Correspondence of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, in the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation collection at the Library of Congress; with transcriptions thereof by Martha Blum.

- Papers of Rudolf Kolisch, in the Houghton Library of Harvard University.
- Anne Van Malderen's dissertation, "Historique et réception des diverse formations Pro Arte (1912–47)" (Université Catholique de Louvain, 1912).

LISTS OF QUARTET MEMBERSHIP

Alphabetical

Basso, Robert (vln II, 1960–64)
Beia, Suzanne (vln II, 1995—present)
Blum, Martha Francis (vln II, 1974–88)
Blum, Richard (vla, 1957–91)
Brosa, Antonio (vln I, 1940–44)
Chisholm, Sally (vla, 1991—present)
Creitz, Lowell (vc, 1955–76)
Evans, C. Warwick (vc, 1940–41)
Friedlander, Ernst (vc, 1943–55)
Gottlieb, Victor (vc, 1941–42)
Halleux, Laurant (vln II, 1912–43)
Karp, Parry (vc, 1976—present)
Kim, Jae-Kyung (vln II, 1988–95)
Kim, Won Mo (vln II, 1964–67)
Kolisch, Rudolf (vln I, 1944–67)
Lemaire, Fernand-Auguste (vc, 1912–18)
Maas, Robert (vc, 1921–40)
McLeod, John (vln II, 1973–74)
Milofsky, Bernard (vla, 1947–57)
Moore, Thomas (vln II, 1967–73)
Onnou, Alphonse (vln I, 1912–40)
Paulu, Norman (vln I, 1967–95)
Perry, David (vln I, 1995—present)
Prevost, Germain (vla, 1912–47)
Quinet, Fernand (vc, 1918–21)
Rahier, Albert (vln II, 1943–60)
Sopkin, George (vc, 1942–43)

Chronological, by Instrument

Violin I	**Violin II**
Onnou, Alphonse (1912–40)	Halleux, Laurent (1912–43)
Brosa, Antonio (1940–44)	Rahier, Albert (1943–60)
Kolisch, Rudolf (1944–67)	Basso, Robert (1960–64)
Paulu, Norman (1967–95)	Kim, Won Mo (1964–67)
Perry, David (1995—present)	Moore, Thomas (1967–74)
	McLeod, John (1973–74)
	Blum, Martha Francis (1974–88)
	Kim, Jae-Kyung (1988–95)
	Beia, Suzanne (1995—present)
Viola	**Violoncello**
Prevost, Germain (1912–47)	Lemaire, Fernand-Aug. (1912–14)
Milofsky, Bernard (1947–57)	Quinet, Fernand (1918–21)
Blum, Richard (1957–91)	Maas, Robert (1921–40)
Chisholm, Sally (1991—present)	Evans, C. Warwick (1940–41)
	Gottlieb, Victor (1941)
	Sopkin, George (1941–43)
	Friedlander, Ernst (1943–55)
	Creitz, Lowell (1955–76)
	Karp, Parry (1976—present)

Personnel Configurations

Grouped by years of the first violinists; names in score order, vln I, vln II, vla, vc.

Onnou (1912–41)

1912–18	Onnou, Halleaux, Prévost, Lemaire
1918–22	Onnou, Halleaux, Prévost, Quinet
1922–40	Onnou, Halleaux, Prévost, Maas
1940	Onnou, Halleaux, Prévost, Evans

Brossa (1940–44)

1940–41	Brossa, Halleaux, Prévost, Evans
1941–42	Brossa, Halleaux, Prevost, Gottlieb
1942–43	Brossa, Halleaux, Prevost, Sopkin
1943	Brossa, Rahier, Prevost, Sopkin
1943–44	Brossa, Rahier, Prevost, Friedlander

Kolisch (1944–67)

1944–47	Kolisch, Rahier, Prévost, Friedlander
1947–55	Kolisch, Rahier, Milofsky, Friedlander
1955–57	Kolisch, Rahier, Milofsky, Creitz
1957–60	Kolisch, Rahier, R. Blum, Creitz
1960–62	Kolisch, Basso, R. Blum, Creitz
1962–64	[Kolisch], Basso, R. Blum, Creitz ("University of Wisconsin Piano Quartet": Steffens)
1964–67	[Kolisch], W. Kim, R. Blum, Creitz ("University of Wisconsin Piano Quartet")

Paulu (1967–95)

1967–73	Paulu, Moore, R. Blum, Creitz
1973–74	Paulu, McCleod, R. Blum, Creitz
1974–76	Paulu, M. Blum, R. Blum, Creitz
1976–88	Paulu, M. Blum, R. Blum, Karp
1988–91	Paulu, J. Kim, R. Blum, Karp
1991–95	Paulu, J. Kim, Chisholm, Karp

Perry (1995–present)

1995–present	Perry, Beia, Chisholm, Karp

INTRODUCTION

Quartet Contexts

The world of music making into which the Pro Arte Quartet was born and in which it operated was well established at the ensemble's inception. The instrumental types and ensemble combinations had been clearly established over generations, as had the forms of ensemble writing. A repertoire of working literature was also being developed, and our quartet made important contributions to this. Its rise and flourishing was accompanied by the operations of many continuing quartet ensembles of significant stature—its siblings and rivals—in an ever-changing kaleidoscope of groups, many of which fell by the wayside as the Pro Arte continued to thrive

These factors provide an important backdrop to our story of the Pro Arte Quartet, and so it is perhaps useful at the outset to say a few words about them, to establish a context.

What has become accepted over some two-and-a-half centuries as the "string quartet" is a somewhat eccentric combination of instruments, if one thinks about it. We expect a vocal ensemble or a chorus normally to consist of the soprano-alto-tenor-bass combination of voice parts (SATB). As it evolved, however, this particular mustering of the violin family amounts to two trebles (or sopranos), an alto and a baritone, but no true bass. On paper, that combination might seem somewhat top-heavy. Nevertheless, it is, in function, quite flexible. The second violin can pair with either the first or with the viola; the viola can also pair with the cello, while the latter, with its wide range, can both reach high in pitch and offer a full-bodied bass line. It is a

remarkably adaptable combination, a fact that has doubtless contributed to its enduring acceptance.

The flexibility of the string quartet formulation is furthered, of course, by the frequent introduction of a fifth instrument, for quintet combinations. The piano is the most common such addition, but wind instruments (such as clarinet) have also found favor. The addition of another stringed instrument, either another viola or another cello, has helped produce some extraordinarily fine string quintets. The addition of both has generated the string sextet, which allows fascinating rethinking of the quartet texture. While the string-quartet configuration can thus be carried beyond itself, that conventional foursome has remained the firm focus of our chamber music.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, experiments with the quartet configuration were pursued by a number of composers, chief among whom, by far, were Haydn and Mozart. Through their work, quartet compositions were recognized as a substantial idiom. By the early nineteenth century, musicians and audiences began thinking generally of musical compositions not just as ephemeral creations of momentary but fleeting attraction, but rather as candidates for inclusion in an incremental literature of "standard works"—an eventual "repertoire." Such was certainly the case as composers discovered in the string quartet at once the most rewarding and the most challenging of instrumental idioms.

It should go without saying that these composers have written not only string quartets but also quartets for string trio and another instrument, and many quintets, with either stringed or other instruments as the fifth partner. Such works are a supplemental dimension to the basic repertoire of string-quartet music. There are, of course, many other works that, if not "basic" or as yet "mainstream," are drawn upon for programming variety. And the Pro Arte Quartet, throughout its history, made a point of encouraging and performing a wide range of new compositions. But the broad repertoire sketched by composers from Haydn onward was the steady resource that provided the group with its pool of programming choices—as will be clear in what follows.

As the idiom's working repertoire evolved, so also did the emergence of professional performing groups with sets of players committed to

corporate careers. At first, groups had a certain *ad hoc* and ephemeral character. Later, as they became associated with the work of living composers, some groups became more stable. Franz Schuppanzigh (1776–1830), the Viennese violinist was a pioneer in creating group continuity with his string quartet, which collaborated with Beethoven in the latter's late quartets. Later counterparts would be two groups in the Soviet Union, the Beethoven Quartet (1931–90) and the Borodin Quartet (1945–present) that, in their heydays, were close collaborators with Shostakovich.

Of the continuing ensembles that emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century, an important one was the Viennese Hellmesberger Quartet (1849–91). France generated the Armingaud Quartet (1855–ca. 1870), in which the composer Lalo played second violin. But the premier one was surely the Joachim Quartet (1869–1907), founded and led by the great violinist Joseph Joachim (1831–1907). This group was a pioneer in giving exclusively quartet concerts, and in touring. Only slightly less venerable was the durable Rosé Quartet (1882—1938). Both the foregoing collaborated with Brahms in his last years. Meanwhile, the United States was graced by the pioneering Kneisel Quartet (1885–1917).

Belgium itself was a thriving scene of quartet activity. The great violinist Eugène Ysaÿe founded a quartet under his name in 1886, as did his successor at the Conservatory, César Thomson, in 1898. Mathieu Crickboom, who played second violin in the Ysaÿe Quartet, founded his own Quatuor Crickboom (1892). Other Belgian groups were the Quatuor Zimmer (1896) and the Quatuor Charlier (1904), in Liège. There was also a Brussels Quartet, made up of German players. These ensembles provided a lively background and inspiration for the young prodigies who created the Quatuor Pro Arte.

Roughly contemporary with the Pro Arte's creation was the Flonzaley (1902–28), the first group to perform a complete cycle of the Beethoven quartets. In England a trail-blazing group was the London Quartet (1908–34). The era of World War I produced the Budapest Quartet (1917—67), one of the most successful and enduring of its type, The Léner Quartet (1918–40s), and the particularly fine Busch Quartet (1919–44, 1946–51), were internationally acclaimed. These were followed in postwar Germany by the Amar Quartet (1921–29), in which the composer Hindemith played viola, and by the Kolisch Quartet (1922–39); also by the Brosa Quartet (1925–38), the Galimir Quartet (1927–93), and the Curtis Quartet (1927–81), as well as the

Prague Quartet (1920–55), the Virtuoso String Quartet (1923–36), the Wiener Konzerthaus Quartet (1934–62), and the Hungarian Quartet (1935–72).

Even in the years of World War II, new groups appeared: the Loewenguth (193?–197?) and Pascal (194?–197?) Quartets; the Végh (1940–81), and the Parrenin (1944–198?). The war's aftermath saw a rapid proliferation of string quartets internationally. To cite them all would be impossible, but there are many noteworthy ones active in performing and recording. Of new groups founded in the United States, the Paganini (1945–66) and Fine Arts (1946–present) benefited from Pro Arte losses; yet another was the LaSalle (1946–87). Noteworthy have been the Juilliard Quartet (1946–present) and the Amadeus Quartert (1947–87). Of the same vintage were the Quartetto Italiano (1945–80), the Smetana Quartet (1945–89), the Tátrai Quartet (1946–present), the Janáček Quartet (1947–present), and the Hollywood Quartet (1947–61). Short-lived and Haydn-focused was the Schneider Quartet (1952–55).

The decade of the 1960s saw further blossoming with the Talich (1964–present), Guarneri (1964–2009), Kodály (1965–present), Lindsay (1965–2005), Melos (1965–2005), Gabrieli (1966–present), Fitzwilliam (1968–present), Panocha (1968–present), Cleveland (1969–95), and Tokyo (1969–2013) quartets. The following decades continued the proliferation, with the Alban Berg (1970–2008), Chilingirian (1971–present), Takács (1975–present), Orlando (1976–97), Martinů (1976–present), Emerson (1976—present), Orion (1987–present), Angeles (1988–present), Brentano (1992–present), Pavel Haas (2002–present), St. Lawrence (1989–present), Jerusalem (1993–present), Belcea (1994–present), Pacifica (1994–present), and Casals (1997–present) Quartets. (The Kronos Quartet, founded in 1973, is devoted quite specifically to avant-garde music and is thus somewhat marginal to our focus.)

The foregoing is, of course, only the most cursory digest of an enormous array of ensembles operating over the course of some three or four centuries. A more comprehensive listing of quartets formed frolm 1914 onward may be found online at Paul Rapoport's QuartetWeb/Performing Groups, while Anne Van Malderen has compiled a listing of 188 quartets organized since Schuppanzigh's in 1804.

Nevertheless, this survey may serve to represent ensembles that have been forerunners, contemporaries, and in many ways

competitors to the Pro Arte Quartet over the course of more than a century (1912–present).

The organization of what follows is chronological. As with any human activity, the life of a string quartet evolves, and it does so over the passage of time. Transformations come as a function of both intragroup dynamics and external circumstances. The processions of performance dates and locations traced in these chapters may seem tedious, and yet they reflect the natural life of a performing group. The players lived that life, and we must live it with them to understand and appreciate their history.

The divisions of that history can be tied to the successive phases of leadership by the individual first violinists. This may appear an arbitrary decision, but it does, in fact, reflect the very distinct characteristics of the quartet's formations and changes over the years. The extent of "control" that different first violinists asserted may have varied, but the influence of each has nevertheless been considerable. From Onnou to Brosa to Kolisch to Paulu to Perry, significant changes of directions and character may be discerned. The changes that developed during the tenures of the two longest-serving first fiddlers were so considerable that it is worth dividing the years of each of their incumbencies into two successive chapters.

Each chapter is subdivided into distinct categories of operation. First, there is a narrative of the ensemble's activities and experiences. This may at first seem like a monotonous catalogue of dates and places. But this reporting reflects the fact that a string quartet is a performing group, with the progression of concerts and events in the group's strenuously busy life. For the original Quatuor Pro Arte, this narrative is organized by years, since the group traveled relentlessly, almost around the calendar, with periods of rest only at certain intervals that did not always correspond to seasons. Their schedule really transcended seasons. On the other hand, for the group's life of residence at the University of Wisconsin, the Pro Arte Quartet was fitted quite directly into the pattern of booking seasons and two-semester academic years.

The second section of each chapter examines, to the extent surviving data allow, the working repertoire of the quartet, phase by phase,

pointing up differences that emerged between various configurations and over time.

The third section of each chapter (except the first) enumerates and evaluates the recordings undertaken and bequeathed by each successive quartet phase. Such segmented treatment is complemented by comprehensive discographic listings in appendix E.

A century of history inevitably must be broken down into digestible units, and this format, it is hoped, will allow for a meaningful absorption of a great deal of what that century has witnessed in the life of one evolving performing group.

THE ONNOU YEARS, I

(1912–31)

Formation, Definition, and Patronage

The Brussels Conservatory of Music was founded in 1832 as an academy of the state, contemporaneously with the creation of the independent Kingdom of Belgium as that state. Among its earliest directors were the Belgian musicologists François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871) and François-Auguste Gevaert (1828–1908), whose successive regimes covered the first seventy-six years of the school's existence, long dominating the musical life of Brussels.

A violin department was established under Lambert Massart. His successor (1843–52) was the eminent violinist and composer Charles-Auguste de Bériot (1802–70), who established what came to be called the Franco-Belgian school of violin playing, based on the traditions and style of Paganini. This school of the violin emerged as the only rival on the international scene to the so-called Russian School of St. Petersburg. The influence of each "school" was great and widespread.

Massart's pupil Henri Vieuxtemps led that faculty department in his turn, and was teacher of Eugène Ysaÿe, who followed the Polish virtuoso Hendryk Wieniawski. Succeeding Ysaÿe as director was César Thomson. In subsequent generations, the violin faculty included André Gertler and Arthur Grumiaux. (Since 1967, the Conservatory has been divided into two institutions, one for instruction in French, the other in Flemish.)

With such a faculty, the Conservatory nurtured several generations of gifted young musicians, who were drawn to it as providing the foundation of their careers. Among them were those who became founders of the Quatuor Pro Arte.

The eldest of them was Germain Prévost, who was born in 1891. His father was a tanner, but the family was actively musical and encouraging. Arthur, the first of the three sons, trained as a clarinetist and became an important figure in Belgian musical life. Germain was the second son, and in his turn became an admired (and money-earning) clarinetist. He studied violin, and at age thirteen he began to teach himself the viola, which was to become his true love. With such diverse foundations, Germain secured entry to the Brussels Conservatory in 1909, at age eighteen, as a clarinet student. Through great diligence he worked up his skills on the viola and advanced rapidly. Though his professional identity as a violist became settled, he never let his clarinet skills lapse completely—and there are stories of his jumping into a substitute-clarinet role at the drop of a hat.

In 1910 Prévost met, among other Conservatory students, the young violinist Alphonse Onnou. The latter, born in 1893, was the son of a tailor who did his best to sustain the boy's quickly emerging talent. In his early violin training, Onnou met another gifted student of the instrument, even younger than he—Laurent Halleux, born in 1897, and a protégé of César Thomson. Onnou entered the Conservatory in 1909, and Halleux followed soon after. Onnou quickly became a star student: Prévost was as deeply impressed by his musicianship and technique as by his personal modesty.

In 1912, at age nineteen, Onnou took first prize in violin at the Conservatory. In that same year, amid their studies, Onnou, fifteen-year old Halleux and twenty-one-year old Prévost, along with an eighteen-year-old cellist named Fernand Auguste Lemaire, began working informally as a string quartet. (Not yet a partner was the eleven-year-old cellist Robert Maas.) That tentative initiation by these precocious young players is one reason for taking 1912 as the inaugural year of the Quatuor Pro Arte—a point to which Onnou would give endorsement in a later statement.

Outside of the Conservatory, two of these brilliant students made their first public appearance in 1913, in a quartet organized by the

violinist Désiré Defauw (1885–1960). Defauw would eventually turn to conducting, becoming Belgium's leading maestro, and would even serve a few years on the Chicago Symphony's podium. But in 1913, he joined with Onnou in creating the Quatuor Defauw, with himself as first violin, Onnou as second, Prévost as violist, and Jacques Gaillard as cellist. (As an example of professional inbreeding, Gaillard would, in 1922, become the father-in-law to QPA cellist Robert Maas.) The Quatuor Defauw made its first public appearance in the spring of 1914, as part of a concert series devoted to exploring new music. (For playing in these "subversive" concerts without proper permission from the Conservatory, Prévost was punished with a month's suspension.)

The Quatuor Defauw operated only infrequently, and the next landmark in the creation of the Quatuor Pro Arte had already come in March of 1913, when Onnou mustered an ensemble with himself as first violinist, sixteen-year-old Halleux as second, Prévost as violist, and, apparently, Lemaire (who had just won the Conservatory's first cello prize) as fourth member. The group had no formal name as yet, but their program of new music by contemporary Belgian composers foreshadowed their eventual commitment to such literature. And that concert has made 1913 the alternate year for the origin of the Quatuor Pro Arte.

At this point it is appropriate to introduce an important patroness who might be called "the first Elizabeth" among the quartet's benefactresses. This is the Queen of Belgium, Elisabeth (in the French spelling of the name). Born a Bavarian duchess (Elizabeth) in 1876, she had trained in her early years as a violinist, becoming an accomplished musician under Ysaÿe's personal guidance. In 1900 she married the Belgian prince who would become King Albert I (r. 1909–34). Joined by her husband, she was a staunch promoter of cultural activities, becoming greatly beloved. She continued to play the violin privately through her life, especially in chamber music.

The emerging Quatuor Pro Arte was only one of the activities that Elisabeth pursued, and in their formative years she made efforts at protecting the members. She seems to have taken a particular interest in Prévost, eventually inviting him to the royal palace to play with her in quartets. Prévost described her as "a lovely lady, very regal, but she had only tiny tone." In 1932, she arranged that the QPA should be designated the official quartet of the Belgian court.

Her lifelong devotion to her personal instrument generated a musical foundation she helped create, and that was named in her honor, the Queen Elisabeth Violin Competition. Organized in 1937, it quickly became prestigious and internationally influential. Other instrumental categories were soon added to her competition. Long-lived, she died in 1965.

The two World Wars were virtual frames for the original Quatuor Pro Arte. The First War threatened—but failed—to disrupt, or at least forestall, the quartet's genesis. The Second War would contribute to the winding down and redefinition of the Brussels ensemble.

Each of the four players had different experiences during the years of World War I. Because of a tubercular condition, Onnou was exempted from military service. He spent the time mainly in German-occupied Brussels, playing in theaters—as did his colleagues in their poststudent years—in order to scratch out a livelihood. But he held onto his idea of a continuing group, keeping up contact with the members, and undertaking quartet performances as often as he could.

At the outset of the war, in 1914, Defauw fled to England, where he was soon to found a new string quartet. Prévost followed him that November, meeting Defauw (who gave him some financial help), and also the fugitive Polish pianist Artur Rubinstein. Lemaire appears to have worked with Defauw, but continued connections with Onnou. Apparently Lemaire played with Onnou's group from 1914, though he seems to have traded off the cello chair intermittently with Fernand-Auguste Quinet. There is only sketchy word of Halleux, but it appears that he, too, remained in Brussels during the war, and may have done some work with Onnou.

It was Prévost, however, who had the liveliest wartime experiences. Fired by patriotism, and despite a family exemption, he chose to leave England and enlist in Belgian forces to fight the Germans. Leaving his viola behind in London, he returned to Belgium, received military training, and was at the front in 1915. He used a furlough in 1916 to go to London and reclaim his viola. As a necessary safeguard, he entrusted it to his brother, Arthur, who was by this time a military bandmaster with Belgian forces. Germain was invited to play in some concerts for soldiers. Word of his presence spread and caught the attention of Queen Elisabeth, who had a summer villa at La Panne, near the front.

Prévost found himself summoned out of the trenches to play in spontaneously formed quartets, of which one in 1915 involved Ysaÿe.

The following spring, Ysaÿe was again present at La Panne, playing first violin to the queen's second. Prévost was summoned to be violist. Whether on this or another occasion (in 1918), he tried to resist the summons on the argument that his uniform was badly soiled from his trench fighting. He was ordered to the palace anyway, where he was given clean clothes upon entry. For his services, the queen offered to have him transferred from active fighting, but he insisted he would continue doing his duty. Seven months before the war's end, when invited to join a military orchestra and string quartet, he agreed, but only on condition that he be allowed to return to the trenches when fighting resumed. His bravery and his devotion to his comrades won him several medals and the eventual rank of sergeant.

In 1918, Prévost was concertizing with his groups in Brussels. The military-generated Quatuor Gadeyne was of excellent quality, but not all members found consistent attendance feasible. Onnou was brought in. Onnou had been working with Halleux, and at this point he invited Prévost to join their quartet—in effect, to rejoin the nascent Pro Arte group. Prévost recalled that he agreed, with the stipulation that the group must rehearse every day, even Sunday. This was accepted. The cellist's identity is somewhat cloudy. It has been suggested that Lemaire had been swallowed up by the war (or bad health), though he seems to have been involved in the group until 1918, when this chair was officially occupied by Fernand-Auguste Quinet, then twenty (and winner of the Conservatory's cello prize in 1914).

Meanwhile, it was apparently in 1917 that the persisting Brussels group settled on what would be come their definitive name. Despite some competition between Onnou and Halleux, clearly Onnou was the guiding member, in intellect and personality. Suggestions were made that the quartet should take his name as the first violinist, a common practice with such ensembles. He rejected this with an argument interesting for its future implications. As Prévost has testified, Onnou said, "No, because I can die and the group must go on. We must find a neutral name." A professor at the Conservatory suggested the Latin term *pro arte*, and this was soon adopted by the members of the group.

Their financially precarious situation was given a military solution. Onnou, Halleux, and Quinet, who had not done military service during the war, still had to fulfill their obligations. Prévost's brother, Arthur, was the nation's leading military bandmaster. Through him

an arrangement was made with a culture-loving general, Baron Victor Buffin, that the three should perform their service—without military training or armed activities—as an official military string quartet, attached to Buffin's army of occupation in Germany. They became the Quatuor à Archet du 1er Régiment des Guides. They concertized widely, mainly in programs of contemporaneous music, much to the fascination of the Germans in their audiences (as Prévost recalled). They also performed for the royal family at La Panne. They received military stipends until 1926, but the pay was not so generous that the quartet members could escape their supplemental employment in movie houses and theater pits—where, in off-duty hours they would hold their quartet rehearsals, for lack of other venues.

Under these circumstances, the quartet went through final stages of definition. As the Quatuor Pro Arte, they were performing regularly, mainly in Brussels but also around Belgium. For one concert in 1920, Onnou yielded the first chair to Halleux. Such "interchangeability," remarked upon as a novelty, was resorted to frequently for some years. (At their discretion, Onnou would take first place in Romantic and modern literature, Halleux in the more Classical and traditional repertoire.) And it was in 1920 that the quartet became involved with a personality who would place them in a new and higher level of visibility.

Paul Collaer (1891–1989) was an exceptional figure in Belgian cultural life. In his early years he studied music at Michelen Conservatory, won prizes, and began at age twenty to concertize as a pianist. At the same time, he began studies in the sciences, at first in physics, earning a doctorate in natural sciences in 1919. He soon became a professor of chemistry at the Mechelen Athenaeum.

Continuing his musical activity, he shared with a number of others the feeling that Belgium had been isolated from the newest cultural developments by World War I. With that in mind, he created in 1921 an organization called Les Concerts Pro Arte. Extended annually, they lasted, under Collaer's direction, until 1934. Their activities extended to involvement with exhibitions of new art.

The Quatuor Pro Arte was already operating with that name, though only in conjunction with their military functions. The coincidence of name only complemented the great affinity the group had with Collaer's intentions. Above all, these musicians fully sympathized

with his promotion of the newest music. Though Collaer was only a few years older than most of the Pro Arte players (and the same age as Prévost), he was in a position to give them their first platform of prominence, at a time when, newly blossoming, they could most use it. The Quatuor Pro Arte players were therefore participants from the first concerts, appeared in them regularly, and served all the way to the end of this concert institution.

After his concert series, Collaer moved on in 1937 to become director of the Flemish division of the Belgian Radio, a post he held until 1953. From this influential position he was able even more fully to champion the newest music, while at the same time he contributed greatly to the revival of sixteenth-century Italian music, by Monteverdi and others.

Collaer continued to expand his interests. During World War II he had plunged into research on ethnomusicology, which became his ultimate specialty. He organized international conferences in this field. He held functions in the International Institute for Comparative Music in Berlin. He was responsible for the creation of the Circle internationale d'études ethno-musicologiques. With funding from UNESCO, he founded a department of ethnomusicology at the Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, near Brussels. On the basis of his wide and deep experience, he wrote and published actively.

Paul Collaer and violist Germain Prévost were to be the longest-lived survivors of the Quatuor Pro Arte's world. Both born in the same year (1891), the two were in contact as late as 1975. At that time Collaer apparently requested of Prévost information about the emergence of the quartet. On September 4 of that year, despite ill health and vision difficulties, Prévost wrote by hand a substantial reply, in which he traced his own and his colleagues' activities from 1912 to 1918. Prévost closed with regrets that his constrained finances made it impossible for him to go to Belgium to confer more fully with Collaer. Other contacts between them might be presumed as well. Prévost died in autumn 1986, at age ninety-five. The still more durable Collaer outlasted him by three years, dying at age ninety-eight.

The Quatuor Pro Arte first appeared in Les Concerts Pro Arte on January 24, 1921, as part of an elaborate and varied program. The quartet's contribution was Darius Milhaud's Quartet no. 2. This was the first

step in what would become a long and close association of the group with this composer. It was extended shortly afterward when Milhaud's Quartet no. 5 was to be given its local premiere in a concert of new French works at the Conservatoire, sponsored by the French embassy. As Prévost remembered it, one of the Conservatory quartet's members refused to play the music, and an appeal was made to Onnou's ensemble that they take over the program. They had only three days in which to prepare this, amid the obligations of their bread-and-butter jobs, but they mastered the scores, notably Milhaud's. The concert was a triumph. Milhaud himself was present and was greatly impressed—marking the group's establishment of cordial contacts with that composer.

The quartet was attracting attention. Collaer's Concerts Pro Arte provided both exposure and publicity. Committed as they were to the newest music, these concerts could be controversial. Prévost later recalled: "Every concert was a scandal, a scandal. Police in the concert. Ooh la la. That was something. People came to see the fights." More staid opportunities also opened. On two occasions in 1921, and on one more in 1922, they were invited to private concerts given at the home of Henri Le Boeuf, an important writer committed to promoting new music.

Amid all this, a final personnel change was made. The cellist Quinet chose to withdraw from the quartet during the summer of 1922. His reasons apparently combined matters of intra-group tensions, poor health, and a desire eventually to make a transition from performer to composer. Negotiations over his replacement were pursued to success in September, with the addition of Robert Maas, then twenty-one years old. He had completed his Conservatory studies two years earlier, winning its cello prize. He first appeared publicly with the quartet in a concert of December 14, 1922. His incorporation into the group now established the membership configuration that would constitute the Quatuor Pro Arte for the next seventeen years, their Belgian years of glory. In that sense, 1922 represents the final landmark year to which we may date the group's creation.

In their concertizing, they made their initial move outside Belgium, first to Paris in 1922, then to Geneva the following year. In Paris that December, in a program entirely of music by Igor Stravinsky, the quartet played his Concertino for String Quartet. It had been composed in 1920 on commission from the Flonzaley Quartet, which, however, had found it too difficult. Prévost would later tell a droll story about the quartet's encounter with Stravinsky over it, dating it to 1920.

When the composer appeared, descending a spiral staircase, he looked "just like the drawing of him by Picasso."

> Yes, he was very cold at first. We'd come to play his Concertino for String Quartet and see if he would accept that we took it with us on tour. The Flonzaley Quartet had commissioned the concertino, and paid a very big sum, but Stravinsky gave them only an eight-minute piece, and it was only rhythm, no melody. Oh, the Flonzaley was an old-fashioned quartet, they didn't have the technique for that piece. But it was our cup of tea.
>
> Stravinsky said to us, "I've made my own performance of the concertino on this pianola and I'll play it for you." Ooh la la. Our first violinist, Onnou, he whispered to me, "I hope that bloody machine doesn't work." And, by golly, it didn't. Please, we said, let us play *our* interpretation, and we did. Stravinsky didn't say a word. He returned up that spiral staircase. And then he came back down and was very warm for a change. He said, "Gentlemen, I accept you play my concertino, it is wonderful how you do it, and I want you to have the manuscript parts. But I want 100 francs every time you play it."
>
> We accepted, although that 100 francs every performance was a risk for us. Quartet fees were low in the 20s, we always traveled third class, carrying all our bags.

The Pro Arte next played it as part of their most extended venture until then, at the first concert of the new International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in Salzburg, Austria, on May 8, 1923, to enthusiastic acclaim. They played it again in Paris in December 1923, and again triumphantly in another all-Stravinsky program on January 14, 1924, at a Pro Arte Concert in Brussels. Their command of the piece won the deep admiration of the composer himself, thus adding another important contact with a contemporary master. And the piece continued to be an active part of their repertoire in their ever-expanding tours (Paris, Geneva, Vienna, Saint-Nazaire, Monte-Carlo, Barcelona, Milan, Rome, Zurich) though 1924.

The quartet's appearances at their early launching pad, Les Concerts Pro Arte in Brussels, won them a good deal of notice from international critics. Such early reputation was only enhanced by their appearance at the ISCM festival in 1923. It was just months before that ISCM debut that a crucially important contact was made, with no less than the "second Elizabeth," the woman who was to become their most important supporter and promoter.

Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864–1953) was one of the three great musical patronesses of the first half of the twentieth century, along with the Princesse de Polignac and Gertrude Clark Whittall—and perhaps the most important of them.

While the Civil War was in its last stages, in the year before Lincoln's assassination, she was born in Chicago to the Sprague family, which had become fabulously wealthy from their S&W (Sprague and Warner) food business. Her father, Albert Arnold Sprague, was an enthusiastic patron of Chicago's musical life, especially opera. She herself showed early musical talent, trained as a pianist, and at a young age even appeared as a soloist with the Chicago Symphony under Theodore Thomas. In 1891 she married Frederic Shurtleff Coolidge. He was no relation to the man who became the thirtieth President of the United States; much later, when one of her commissions was mistakenly attributed to the wife of Calvin Coolidge, she jokingly called herself "the other Mrs. Coolidge." She did not know that president, but she did become close friends with the thirty-first president, Herbert Hoover, and with his wife.

"ESC," as she was sometimes called, withdrew from public performance as a result of a persistent stage fright and of the onset of her partial deafness, which appeared first in her twenties and deepened thereafter. She nevertheless delighted in private chamber music playing. She also made some efforts as a composer, which continued over the years—as her "consolation," as she said. We know of some early songs of hers, and from later years a string quartet (1915), a trio for piano and strings (1930), and a sonata for oboe and piano (1947). Two movements of the quartet were transcribed for orchestra by Frederick Stock and performed in 1916; and the entire composition was recorded by her namesake quartet in 1942.

In 1915–16, the deaths in close succession of her father, her husband, and her mother left Mrs. Coolidge an independent heiress of great wealth. She then began to pursue her destiny as a patroness. Her benevolences were directed toward a number of worthy causes, but most specifically to musical ones, and above all to chamber music. A particular focus was the Library of Congress's Music Division. In 1925 she created the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, whose various purposes included the commissioning of new musical works, and the arrangement of concerts and festivals in which they would be

performed. She even went so far as to fund the building of a theater at the Library of Congress for such purposes. All this was supplemented by her institution in 1932 of the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Medal "for eminent services to chamber music."

The most spectacular fruits of all this were her awards and supports—both from the Foundation and from her own pocket—to literally hundreds of composers. The list of them is a who's-who of composers of the first half of the twentieth century, both famous and now-forgotten ones, and a large number of their resulting works have become acknowledged and regularly played masterpieces. She was noteworthy in not limiting her support only to music fitting her tastes. Frequently she actually did not like new scores she had fostered. She was famous in her later decades for attending premieres and turning off her hearing aid. "I can pay for it, but I don't have to listen to it" was her typically forthright explanation. On one occasion—recalled by later quartet member, violist Bernard Milofsky—when asked "why she put her money into music and not into art, she replied, 'Young man, I may be deaf, but I'm not blind.'"

It was to her greatest love, chamber music, that she devoted her most passionate support. She and her husband had built a home in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in the Berkshire hills. In 1918 she instituted the South Mountain Chamber Music Festival there, and later at the Temple of Music nearby. At these gatherings, young and new ensembles were heard, and interacted. Mrs. Coolidge gave support to a series of string quartets in which she invested often-fleeting hopes. Among the ensembles receiving her largesse were the Berkshire, Coolidge, Gordon, Kolisch, Lenox, Letz, London, and Roth Quartets. To many of them, she had become the "Goddess of Chamber Music."

As she aged, Mrs. Coolidge seemed more and more regal in manner. Prévost recorded his first impressions of her as being "like a statue": garbed in a powerfully conservative, elegantly plain dress, with a lace collar, and a big hat. He said he was afraid of her.

Among contemporary composers whose music the Quatuor Pro Arte had sampled was Alfredo Casella, who invited the quartet to participate in a pair of concerts in May 1923 at the American Academy in Rome, where he was music director. The Academy was to be a beneficiary of Mrs. Coolidge's support, while Italy in general was her favorite country

for travel through most of her life. She attended these concerts, and there she first encountered the Pro Arte. As Casella himself quipped, it was "love at first hearing." This reaction was only reinforced when she heard the group again in Salzburg at the ISCM concerts that August. These encounters constituted a landmark not only in the quartet's history, but also in Mrs. Coolidge's life—and she was at the time just short of her fifty-eighth birthday.

Not only their playing but also the personality of Onnou himself struck sympathetic chords and drew her into a deeply personal bond. In fact, it was she who put an end to sporadic chair swapping: Onnou would be first violin, and that was that. A further advantage for Onnou was that, unlike other members of the quartet, he spoke some English, which facilitated his communication with Mrs. Coolidge. Often disappointed with other quartets she had sponsored, she found in the Pro Arte what she was looking for: the perfect vehicle for her advancement of chamber music at the very time when her involvements in Pittsfield were collapsing. She offered to support the Pro Arte's concerts, quickly becoming their booking manager and agent as well, in cooperation with their Brussels manager, Gaston Verhuyck.

Through her efforts, the quartet was set up for a series of ten concerts, in March and April of 1924, in eight Italian cities (Milan, Brescia, Bari, Rome, Genoa, Florence, Venice, and Padua). The latter six of these concerts offered a single program of two works. One was a Concerto for String Quartet, op. 40, by Casella, who had asked personally that they give the work its premiere run. The other work was nothing less than Arnold Schoenberg's landmark piece of avant-gardism, *Pierrot Lunaire*, op. 21. The Pro Arte had already been digging into Schoenberg's works, and had performed the first two of his quartets. It had even dabbled with parts of this revolutionary opus 21, but in these six concerts the quartet joined with other Viennese musicians under the composer's direct leadership. (The Florence performance on April 1 was attended by the cancer-ridden Giacomo Puccini, just months before he died of heart failure, on November 29, 1924, in Brussels.)

Through the following two years, the Quatuor Pro Arte continued to concertize widely in Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Italy, while also maintaining their deep involvement with Collaer's Les Concerts Pro Arte. Long gone were the days of jobbery in Brussels theaters: constant travel and total commitment to the quartet on the part of all four men were now the realities of life. At their most active, we are told, they required some twenty-three large suitcases, which they handled