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**JOACHIM RAFF:
The Piano Trios
by Larius J. Ussi**

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Joachim Raff: The Piano Trios

by Larius J. Ussi

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Today, who has heard of the name of Joachim Raff and who knows, or has heard, any of his music? One small morsel, his famous *Cavatina*, is all that has stood between him and total oblivion. Poor Raff! It was not always so. No, if you had, say between 1875 and 1910, consulted any of the many books and articles that were devoted to discussing the music of the then contemporary composers, you would have found Raff's name always mentioned along with those of Liszt, Brahms and Wagner as one of Germany's leading composers. His music was compared favorably with that of Mendelssohn, Schumann and Tchaikovsky and, if concert programs are anything to go by, performed just as often. Yet, by 1920, his music had all but disappeared from the concert stage and it would only be another decade before his name faded away altogether.

The question invariably arises as to why and how such a meteoric decline occurred. Raff's reputation certainly was not the only one which waned and to a great extent its initial disappearance can be attributed to the highly negative attitude toward romanticism which occurred after the First World War. This revulsion with romanticism temporarily harmed the reputations of many romantic composers and, for a long time, destroyed the popularity of their music as well. Names, such as Spohr and Hummel, which had been very close to the front rank, all but vanished and their music entirely disappeared from the concert stage. Even such greats as Schumann and Mendelssohn did not entirely escape this phenomenon. But whereas Mendelssohn and Schumann had recovered by mid-century, and Spohr and Hummel began to revive during the 1970's, Raff and his music continued to be ignored until only a few years ago. This was pretty much due to a factor that applied only to him: Raff, despite having written many masterworks, had unfortunately penned literally hundreds of pieces of little or no musical value. There was certainly a reason for this and a good one too, but it is only now that this reason has slowly been taken into account by those re-evaluating Raff's musical contribution.

With no patron or permanent teaching post, Raff found himself in the unfortunate position wherein he was unable to make a living as a free-lance composer of serious music or by giving private lessons. At the same time, he found that he was able to churn out pedestrian works—for example, potpurris for piano on famous songs from operas—which were extremely popular among the home music-making crowd and especially with amateur pianists. And it was this which, in the end, for many years paid the bills and put food on the table for his family. Sadly, it was only during the last five years of his life, upon his 1877 appointment as director of the new conservatory in Frankfurt, that he was entirely able to stop writing the ephemeral and cliché-ridden works aimed at the mass market which had kept him alive. Unfortunately, his huge output of this type of work led latter day scholars and critics, who were re-examing past composers, to write off Raff as nothing more than a hack. While it cannot be denied that Raff produced a great quantity of works best left forgotten, when one concentrates on the music about which he really cared, the music upon which he took time and lavished care, it becomes quite clear that he was a composer of great ability and talent, able to create magnificent, first rate works deserving of revival.

Joseph Joachim Raff (1822-1882) was born in the small town of Laachen not far from Zurich. His father, a school teacher and an organist, was not Swiss but from Württemberg. He had fled to Switzerland during the Napoleonic wars. The only real musical education Raff received was from his father. Early on it became clear that he had an extraordinary talent and at a young age was an accomplished pianist and violinist as well as an organist. In addition, he showed considerable talent for mathematics and had hoped to attend university to further these studies but his family could not afford it. Instead, he was sent to a Jesuit teacher-training college. Although Raff became a school teacher, he did not abandon music. He began to give piano lessons and started to compose. Soon he realized that he did not want to be a school teacher but was unable to get any of his works published. Then, on the advice of a friend and composer, Franz Abt, Raff sent several of his compositions to Mendelssohn for his opinion. Mendelssohn was impressed and contacted his own publisher, Breitkopf & Härtel writing, *"If a quite famous name stood on the title page of these pieces, I am convinced that you would do good business with them, for from the content certainly nobody would notice that a good many of these pieces are not by Liszt or a similar virtuoso."* The result was that Breitkopf published 13 of Raff's early works for piano. This was enough to convince Raff to give up school teaching, against his parents' wishes, and to try to make his way as a musician and composer. This turned out to be a catastrophic decision, certainly in the short term, as Raff's father washed his hands of him and, as he had quit his job, he had no means of support.

He then made up his mind to seek out Mendelssohn and become his student but, being unable to make a living, he was forced to remain in Zurich where he could not even find work teaching the piano. His situation was so extreme that he could not afford lodging and was forced to sleep outdoors on park benches. He ran up debts which he could not pay and was declared bankrupt and threatened with prison.

At this juncture (1845), Raff learned that Liszt was performing in Basel. Determined to seek him out, he set out on foot. It was a hard two days walk from Zurich, during which it rained the entire time. When finally he arrived at the ticket office, disheveled and dripping wet, it was only a few minutes before the concert was to begin. All of the tickets had been sold and despite his protestations that he had walked from Zürich just to hear Liszt play, he was unable to obtain a ticket. But by chance, Liszt's personal secretary overheard his pleas and took Raff backstage and telling him to wait in the wings. Liszt, preparing to leave the Green Room for the stage, was told by his secretary about Raff. Ever one for the grand gesture, Liszt replied *"Bring him here! He is to sit next to me on the stage"*. In later years, Raff recalled that as Liszt played, *"a complete circle of rainwater gathered around me on the floor; like a spring's source I sat there"*. After the concert, Raff told the great man his sorry story and showed him some of his compositions. To his amazement, Liszt, who must have been impressed, found Raff employment, albeit it menial and poorly paid, with a music publishing firm in Cologne. He also introduced Raff to music publisher Schott, who eventually published some more of his early compositions. Finally in 1846, Raff was able to meet Mendelssohn and to show him his latest compositions. Mendelssohn, though impressed, was disappointed Raff had indiscriminately modeled his music upon Mendelssohn's own style and, to a lesser degree, upon that of Liszt, rather than striving for greater originality. He suggested Raff come to study with him at Leipzig, but unfortunately Raff's financial situation made it impossible. Again, it was Liszt who came to Raff's rescue and found him better employment with the Hamburg music publisher Julius Schubert. During the time Raff worked for Schubert, the two became good friends

and remained so throughout their lives. Schuberth was impressed with the young man who not only worked diligently and hard for him but also clearly had compositional talent. Then toward the end of 1849, Liszt offered Raff a position as his personal assistant. At the same time, Schuberth offered him a promotion and a chance to run his business in his New York branch. It was a difficult decision for Raff who eventually accepted Liszt's offer. The position was ill-defined with vague responsibilities and one which left him with little time for composition. He became a combination personal secretary, copyist, orchestrator and translator for Liszt. On the positive side, he met and made friends with many of the famous and important musicians of his day, including, Joachim, von Bülow and Tchaikovsky among others who made the pilgrimage to Weimar to visit Liszt.

As part of Liszt's inner circle, Raff was considered a member of what became called the New German School. Here, it is important to relate that by the mid 19th century, the German musical world had divided into two warring camps. Opposed to the members of the New German School were the Classicists, who held up Schumann and Mendelssohn as their ideal. Later, Brahms was to become their standard bearer. Each camp had little use for the music of their opponents. And here is where Raff was to founder. Although literally at the very center of the New German School and certainly influenced by the music of Liszt and early Wagner, he was not really a member of it, certainly not an uncritical or unquestioning member of it. In 1854, he wrote a book entitled *Die Wagnerfrage* (The Wagner Question) which criticized several of the newer developments in Wagner's music. Raff though highly impressed with *Lohengrin* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, had little appreciation or use for the operas of the Ring Cycle. His book astounded those around him and its immediate effect was to estrange him from Liszt and the Wagnerites, for whom there was no Wagner question. After this, Raff's life at Weimar gradually became intolerable. He made up his mind to leave and strike off on his own. It was a brave thing to do. To those of the New German School he was a traitor. Yet, despite this break, the Classicists continued to regard him as a member of it and for a long time did not and would not embrace his works. He was thus isolated and without anyone to champion his music.

In 1856 Raff moved to Wiesbaden near Frankfurt where he spent the next 21 years of his life. He was now thirty four, soon to be married and with a family to support. Unlike composers such as Tchaikovsky, Raff had no patron. Nor did he have a concert career to fall back on such as Liszt or Moscheles, nor a teaching appointment at a conservatory such as Gade, Reinecke or Rheinberger, nor directorship of an orchestra or theater such as Bruch, Gernsheim or Bargiel. Nor did he have what could be called a meaningful paying job. Although employed by two girls schools in Wiesbaden as a music teacher, the salary was not enough for one person let alone a family. Starvation became a real possibility and it was only the knowledge that he could crank out highly popular but ephemeral works of little or no artistic merit in great numbers which probably gave him the courage to take this almost unheard of path. Few other important composers of the day, the notable exception being Brahms, were able to support themselves merely by writing music. In addition to this constant stream of what might be called "pulp music", Raff eventually was able to obtain some extra income by giving private piano lessons. Still, for many years, Raff and his family experienced lean times with a precarious existence. Nonetheless, Raff found time to devote himself to works of real worth and nearly all of his compositions of artistic merit date from his years in Wiesbaden.

Despite the trivial works he published, by the 1870's Raff's serious music was universally acclaimed. In 1877, this led to his being offered the directorship of a new conservatory in Frankfurt. Here, he spent the last five years of his life, working tirelessly to create a first rate music school. His stature was such that he was able to attract such luminaries as Clara Schumann to the faculty, and by the time of his death, the Frankfurt conservatory was acknowledged as one of the best in Germany.

Raff wrote five piano trios, four of which are extant. The first was composed during the late 1840's and was either destroyed or lost. His first surviving and published work in this genre, *Piano Trio No.1 in c minor, Op.102*, dates from 1861 and was published by his friend Schuberth in 1864. It was premiered to considerable acclaim and almost immediately became regarded as a masterwork. Nearly seventy years later, in his 1934 *Handbuch für Klaviertriospieler* (Handbook for Piano Trio Players), the famous chamber music critic and scholar Wilhelm Altmann warmly recommended it, writing that it still deserved to be heard in concert and could hold its own against any of the other of the major works of this genre.

The big first movement is marked *Rasch* (quick) but it does not actually begin this way. Rather, there is a masterful, slow introduction which only gradually ratchets the tempo up to speed as it builds dramatic tension. This introduction is a very fine example of Raff's abundant compositional skill. The piano opens the work in a Lisztian fashion, dramatic and dignified. Twice, the strings reply with a somewhat pleading answer. Then out of this the piano takes over with a long, restless eighth note passage, entirely in its bass register. The tension becomes palpable. At last, the heavily accented first theme breaks forth. It has a martial quality to it and, although arresting, it is not particularly melodic. As it hurls forward with considerable motion, Raff adds a heroic touch to it. Interestingly, the first part of the development section shows a Schubertian lyricism which is absent from the theme itself. In the second theme, we hear the lyricism which was hinted at during the development section. Though not particularly sad, it has a valedictory quality to it. When this trio was first published, it appeared with the title *Grand Trio No.1*, and either Raff or Schuberth the publisher must have felt it justified the title. Certainly, the justification would have been the size, scope and elaboration of the first movement which is written on a very large scale. Nevertheless, because of a rather impressive display of compositional virtuosity, especially in regard to the first theme, the movement in no way gives the impression of being too long. Certainly, at first blush, the first theme does not reveal any particular wealth of possibilities for development and it comes as rather a pleasant surprise to hear Raff present them.

The second movement, *Sehr Rasch* (very quick), is a scherzo, which begins softly as a fugue with the violin beginning, then the cello and the piano. The theme is fleet with a tinge of the macabre. The very beautiful theme from the trio section is especially memorable. It has, at least to me, a strangely familiar quality to it. It would not be out of place as the main theme of a 1950's Western film, upbeat and lyrical, somewhat heroic and with forward motion. Some commentators have called it a hunting theme based with the quality of a folk melody. The scherzo then returns and the movement ends softly and in a haunting fashion.

Wilhelm Altmann considered the third movement, *Mässig langsam* (moderately slow), as the "crown" of the work. In his *Handbuch*, he writes, "*It is poetically executed and is one of the composer's most magnificently inspired creations. A blissful air of peaceful quiet has been breathed into it along with uncommonly beautiful sonority.*"

The lovely opening theme is presented in its entirety by the piano alone before the strings enter. Interestingly, there is a rather harsh dissonance during a passing note which certainly sounds like it must have been a mistake by either the composer or the performers but the fact that it is repeated later in the movement makes it clear that it is certainly intentional. The middle section shows a burst of dramatic energy but the hopeful and optimistic mood does not change.

The stirring finale, *Rasch bewegt*, (quick moving), replete with three memorable and tuneful themes, for my money, is the crowning movement. Volker Tosta, the editor to the new edition by the German firm Nordstern, writing of the finale states "*it reminds one of Slavic musical examples.*" but this is really a very misleading statement. The movement, which is clearly a rondo, opens with an attractive, Mendelssohnian theme, in the cello, full of yearning. As for the second theme, one could hardly find a more typically Hungarian-sounding melody. It is only briefly in the second half of the third theme that the elaboration, in the minor, veers into the realm of the Slavic. Attractive and unexpected, it does justify Tosta's sweeping remark. If anything, this excellent finale is in the long and honored tradition of the Hungarian rondo. The coda is short and well executed. This trio was recognized as a masterpiece at the time it was written and in my opinion it remains so today. Without question it belongs in the repertoire and is as good as anything written from this period. With the exception of a few brief but somewhat difficult passages in the piano, the work will present no difficulties for amateurs. As noted, it is in print from Edition Nordstern and has been recorded along with his Fourth Piano Trio on CPO CD# 9996162.

Piano Trio No.2 in G Major, Op.112 was composed two years after his first in 1863. This was the time during which Raff was still almost mass-producing operatic potpourris and other for which he was paid a rather good price compared to his serious music which he was usually forced to sell for a pittance. Like the First Trios, the Second's tempi and other markings are in German, a practice Raff was to terminate as he began to distance himself from the New German School. The title to the opening movement, *Rasch, froh bewegt* (quick, lively & joyful) in fact aptly describes the main theme which is presented by the violin. This is a very good theme, full of possibilities but Raff's exploration of them perhaps is too extensive. The second subject is gentler and lyrical. It makes but two short appearances. The music softly fades away as the movement concludes but the final two cadences which end it are played *ff*. This is a good movement but probably would benefit by being somewhat shorter.

Next comes a scherzo marked *Sehr Rasch* (very quick). In the minor, it is a somewhat lopsided but lilting dance, characterized by the rhythmic feature of a 16th note tied to an 8th for several measures. Triplet passages are used consistently throughout to interrupt the mood. The lyrical but brief middle section consists entirely of a canon in which the violin leads and the cello follows while the piano provides the harmonic underpinning.

The magnificent third movement, *Mässig langsam* (moderately slow), is undoubtedly the trio's center of gravity. Spacious and calm, this music might well serve as a eulogy. The movement opens quietly with the piano presenting the main theme in its entirety. It is solemn and dignified with the aura of Schubert's late piano sonatas to it. The development, primarily entrusted to the strings, adds a mildly pleading air to this mix. Then a lengthy, turbulent and roiling middle section explodes forth. First, there is just unrest, but quickly Raff heightens the tension until there is a powerful sense of the melodramatic.

The rondo finale, *Rasch, durchaus belebt* (Quick, lively throughout) begins with a catchy theme characterized by whirling 16th notes. Its development takes the form of a fugue. In the middle section, the piano is given a lively and peculiarly familiar Chinese interlude. Tchaikovsky borrowed it for use in his Nutcracker Suite. The further elaboration of the main theme is syncopated and recalls Schumann. The coda follows an exciting stretto section and leaves nothing to be desired. It must be admitted that this movement makes considerable technical demands on all of the players, though it is certainly not beyond the scope of good amateurs. This is a fine trio, well worth concert performance. That it is not an unqualified masterpiece is due to a certain diffuseness, primarily found in the first movement.

Some seven years passed before Raff returned to the genre of the piano trio again. By then, he had been living in Wiesbaden for nearly 15 years and had, despite the odds, been able to support himself and his family, albeit, by churning out innumerable "potpourris" for piano based on popular opera themes, in order to capitalize on the almost insatiable home-music market. As I noted in the first part of my article, after his death, it was this, more than anything else, which served to destroy his reputation as one of the leading composers of the mid 19th century. It did not, however, during his lifetime harm him. In fact it helped, to some extent, make him a household name. As a known composer, it served him in good stead when he actually produced serious works of the first order. It took the critics and general public by surprise and helped to catapult him forward into the front rank of important composers. By 1870, the time at which he composed his **Piano Trio No.3 in a minor, Op.155**, he had "arrived", so to speak. It was published in 1872. In the opening movement, marked *Quasi a capriccio, Allegro agitato*, Raff takes his time before stating the main theme. He begins in a highly unorthodox fashion, not with an introduction or with something which at least sounds like an introduction, but with music which appears as if it is beginning in mid-phrase. The piano opens with an a minor (tonic) chord. Immediately, the cello enters with a phrase which sounds like it will introduce the theme, but instead the violin and then the piano quickly imitate this utterance. The music does not really seem to move forward but, nonetheless, suspense is built up, especially by the downward falling passage which does, in fact, lead to the agitated and passionate main theme. Surprisingly, we find that this unusual beginning, which is treated as a caprice, is the kernel of the main theme. But then, as the movement progresses, we hear that Raff has virtually used every snippet of the caprice, each for a different and an important part of the material in the *Allegro*. For example, the downward falling passage is used not only as a development tool but also as a bridge passage on more than one occasion. One cannot but admire the masterly way in which this is done. It is simply perfect. The only theme, whose roots cannot be found on the opening page, is the charming second theme that Raff introduces before developing either. This is, in my opinion, an absolutely outstanding movement, one of the finest in the romantic literature. It is highly creative, and, at one and the same time, full of passion and drama, but also filled with lovely, lyrical melodies, ingeniously juxtaposed between the fiery counter melodies. Beyond this, it has excellent partwriting and a thrilling coda. I would like to give an example of the lovely and lyrical second theme which provides a superb contrast to the theme you see on your left, but unfortunately space does not allow it and I recommend that you avail yourself of the new sound-bite service now being offered so that you can hear it. Although it is a big movement, it is not a measure too long, considering all of the wonderful material and fine treatment that Raff gives it.

As in his earlier trios, Raff places a scherzo, although he does not call it such, in the second position. This *Allegro assai* can almost be called an interlude, as it is rather short, but perfect in every way. Halloween Music is the phrase which best describes the main theme. It is spooky and conjures up images of goblins and ghosts. Raff calls for a rather fast tempo, which the music certainly requires to be effective. The pianist must have a very light touch indeed or else the sparkling effect of the writing will be entirely lost. Even his critics have conceded that Raff was an absolute master of the mercurial and fleet-footed scherzo. In this, he has few if any equals and no superiors. This *Allegro assai* is a good example why. The long-lined main theme in the strings cruises along and is then complimented by the piano's lightening responses, which complete each phrase. There is no real ascertainable trio section, however, a second lyrical melody, which is in no way haunting, is intertwined and combined throughout what is left of this short, exquisite morsel.

The third movement, *Adagietto*, is a theme and set of several variations. The solemn, but not tragic, theme is entrusted to the piano alone. In the first four variations, the strings are allowed to elaborate on the theme. The first variation, with the cello restating it in its middle-low register, is especially fine. In the second variation, the violin takes over but the solemn, quiet mood remains. In the third variation, the cello has a very long 32nd note passage which, given the tempo, is not intended to be rushed. One hears, if only a little, remnants of Beethoven. However, the 32nd note arpeggio sextuplets given to the violin in the next variation, four to a measure, are somewhat on the virtuosic side. Of importance is that they are meant to be played softly as a background against the theme in the piano. In the next few variations, the piano is then given free reign to explore the theme in what are very technically demanding passages. Yet, they must not be played heavily or in a way which draws undue attention to them. Once these are over, all three voices join together in presenting the peaceful coda that brings this movement to a close. Raff succeeds very nicely in creating a fine set of variations which hold one's interest from start to finish.

The magnificent finale, *Larghetto, Allegro*, begins with a slow, somewhat sad introduction. Unlike the opening movement, here we have a more traditional introduction, whose purpose is to build suspense. But the material in this introduction is not used elsewhere in the movement. The opening and main theme is briefly given out by the piano and then repeated by cello before the violin, without further ado, states the first part of the second theme. It is at this point that the cello is allowed present the first theme in its entirety. While the first theme is given a rather extensive development, the second, as well as the third theme, simply interrupt what is going on, are stated without further development, and then disappear until they make brief appearances later on in the movement. Perhaps it might be more accurate to regard them as bridge passages but they are both very fine. The second theme follows immediately on the heels of the first and seems to fit beautifully. Some critics have referred to the third theme as Hungarian, but I believe it more Turkish sounding, or at least how European composers of the time generally represented Turkish music. It has the same sort of sound that one finds in Mozart's 5th violin concerto. We hear it, however, only after the first theme has been entirely developed. There is a fourth theme, which is long and lyrical and used as a contrasting middle section. Raff devotes quite a lot of attention in developing it and otherwise exploring its possibilities. As might be expected, he concludes with a suitably exciting coda. To sum up, this work, along with his First Piano Trio, belongs in the repertoire and is the equal to any of the other piano trios from this era. There is no modern edition, but copies can be obtained from the Cobbett Association Library.

Piano Trio No.4 in D Major, Op.158 was composed a few months after the Third Trio. Raff's renewed interest in chamber music during the summer of 1870 can, in part, be explained by the incredible success of his Third Symphony *Im Walde* (In the Forest). Premiered in the spring of that year, it became one of the most popular symphonic works in Europe overnight, and was widely hailed as the finest symphony written since Beethoven. Raff therefore hoped that this success would draw the public's attention to his chamber music as well.

A point I forgot to mention earlier in this discussion is the fact that as Raff distanced himself from the *New German School*, he stopped his former practice of using German words to give tempo and other performance indications. Instead, he returned to the traditional Italian used by the so-called *Classicists* such as Brahms and his followers. Hence, while the movements of his first two piano trios, written in the early 1860's, use German, we find he has returned to Italian in his last two works in this medium.

The first movement, *Allegro*, begins with a sparking series of 16th note triplets lightly played in the piano whilst the cello introduces the noble main theme in a low registers. The violin takes it further, and then Raff, contrary to his practice in the other trios, develops this theme at some length. In doing so, the heroic nature of the music is slowly transmogrified into something lighter and more optimistic. But as a result, the music loses its dignity and becomes somewhat trivial. For my taste, the development goes on entirely too long. The second theme is closely related to the development and seamlessly evolves from it. This, unfortunately, creates a sense of monotony. The piano part is very difficult in that it has tremendously long, fast passages which require a secure technique and a very light touch.

Again, the second movement, *Allegro assai*, is a scherzo though not so marked. The first theme is a lugubrious dance, lumbering along in the strings and a little on the heavy side. The piano is used quite nicely to compliment what is going on. The second theme is lyrical and quite romantic. This is a good but not a great scherzo. It does not, in my opinion, rise to the high level of excellence that one generally finds in Raff's scherzi.

The impressive slow movement, *Andante quasi Larghetto*, begins with a fine melody first sung by the cello. Raff creates a magical similar to that which Mendelssohn achieves in some of his *Songs Without Words*. The violin then enters, taking the theme farther, and then the two strings present a beautiful "lovers' duet". The mood imperceptibly becomes elegiac and there is a real sense of loss, only partially lightened by the aura of calm which the coda brings.

The finale, *Allegro*, begins with a very brusque and modern (for that time) sounding theme. It is restless and driving, with some similarity to a tarantella. It does go on for long, however, before the second theme is introduced. Not as rhythmically muscular, its development is frequently interrupted by the piano, loudly and violently playing the signature chords from the opening theme. This creates a very restless mood. Eventually, these interruptions become rather annoying since they are always played *ff*. The coda is short but adequately handled and brings the work to a competent finish.

Of Raff's four piano trios, to my mind, the Fourth is the weakest. Raff seems to have been trying a bit too hard. For once, his melodic muse does not pour forth the very

best. The exception to this statement is the slow third movement, undoubtedly the high point of the trio. While it is not a bad work, it seems merely adequate, and alongside of the Second Piano Trio, not to mention either the First or Third, there is no reason to play it other than for variety's sake. Certainly, I would not suggest it deserves to be revived or placed in the concert repertoire. There are far too many other works, including Raff's own First and Third trios, which deserve that honor.

Raff's four piano trios have by no means been uniformly admired. The case of the famed chamber music critic Wilhelm Altmann is as good an example as any. He cannot seem to make up his mind. In *Cobbett's Cyclopaedia*, in what is generally a dismissive article about Raff's chamber music, Altmann writes that the piano trios are the least attractive of his chamber works. He, as most other critics, complained that, "...side by side with really impressive and good ideas are found others that are entirely commonplace." Yet, writing in his own *Handbuch für Klaviertriospieler* (Handbook for Piano Trio Players) some years afterward, he argues that the First Piano Trio deserves to be in the repertoire and that the Third Trio is every bit as good.

So then, when we come to sum up and consider Raff's piano trios as a whole, we must admit that they are not all of the same quality. The First and Third Trios are Raff's best. In these two works, we find an overabundance of really fine ideas which are very well executed. They rise to the highest level and can be called masterworks. The great originality of the first movement to the Third Trio is really unparalleled. That these two works are no longer in the repertoire is a shame because there is no question that audiences would find great enjoyment in them. Piano Trio No.2, though perhaps not as fine, is also a very good work that is strong enough to appear in concert.

That Raff's reputation has suffered, and that his fine serious music has disappeared from the concert stage in large part because of the narrow-minded view of those who believe a serious composer ought not to stoop to write salon music is a pity. As the famous pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow put it, "*Raff combined the most diverse styles and yet preserved the purity of all of them: the salon style in the best sense (in the salon music of Raff, a delicate irony shimmers through), and also the strict style.*" He goes on to marvel that Raff, as no one else, could do both.