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*Abstract*

The author takes the opportunity of the recent issue of the CD Brilliant Classics 96921 to reflect on the genesis and transmission of Gaetano Donizetti's production of quartets. The composer was also a very prolific chamber musician, and in particular the number and refinement of the 22 quartets reveal that this was not an ephemeral interest. The performance history of this corpus is long and quite demanding: from the beginning (the contribution reconstructs their first "rediscovery" in London by the quartet Bazzini, Arditi, Piatti and Bottesini) the musicographers sought to relate the interest and inspiration of these compositions to the Austro-Germanic classical tradition. More recent performances, such as the recording by the Quartetto Delfico reviewed here, illuminate the scores of Quartets nos. 15, 17 and 18 with more composite and multicultural views, bringing out their different souls: the virtuoso and brilliant, "French", the "Italian", contrapuntal and theatrical, and of course the more ideological and structural, "Austro-Germanic".