

Leos Janacek - String Quartets (2008)

Written by bluesever

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1. String Quartet No. 2 "Intimate Letters" 2. 1 I. *Andante* Quatuor Diotima 3. 2 II. *Adagio* Quatuor Diotima 4. 3 III. *Moderato* Quatuor Diotima 5. 4 IV. *Con moto* Quatuor Diotima

1. String Quartet No. 1 "Kreutzer Sonata"

2. 5 I. *Con moto* Quatuor Diotima 3. 6 II. *Con moto* Quatuor Diotima 4. 7 III. *Con moto* Quatuor Diotima 5. 8 IV. *Con moto* Quatuor Diotima

1. String Quartet No. 2 "Intimate Letters"

2. 9 I. *Andante* Naaman Sluchin & Yun-Peng Zhao, Violins - Garth Knox, Viola d'Amore - Pierre Morlet, Cello 3. 10 II. *Adagio* Naaman Sluchin & Yun-Peng Zhao, Violins - Garth Knox, Viola d'Amore - Pierre Morlet, Cello 4. 11 III. *Moderato* Naaman Sluchin & Yun-Peng Zhao, Violins - Garth Knox, Viola d'Amore - Pierre Morlet, Cello 5. 12 IV. *Con moto*

Quatuor Diotima: Naaman Sluchin & Yun-Peng Zhao, Violins Frank Chevalier, Viola Pierre Morlet, Cello + Garth Knox, Viola d'Amore

The versions of Leos Janáček's String Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters," heard here are both new. Neither quite delivers the "radical evolution in the character of the work" promised in the booklet (in French and English, with the Alpha label's usual wonderful art-historical essay by Denis Grenier), but both are intriguing. The version concluding the disc uses a viola d'amore, a middle-sized Baroque viol with sympathetic strings that create a sweet, caressing sound entirely appropriate for a work dedicated to the composer's much younger (38 years) mistress. This instrumentation was apparently Janáček's intention, but he gave up on it after rehearsals ran into unspecified problems. Probably players of the rather difficult instrument were scarce indeed in Prague in 1928. Its restoration does draw attention to the active role of the viola part in this constantly expressive quartet, but so does the version played on the first four tracks. This is made from a new edition of the work, drawn from copies of the work used in rehearsals made before Janáček's death. (He never heard it played in public performance.) It differs from the one usually heard in various details, many of them having to do with tempo and tending to emphasize the shifting moods and episodic quality of the work. The String Quartet No. 1, also a product of the composer's old age, is also programmatic; it is based on an episode in a Tolstoy short story. The Quatuor Diotima offers a passionate performance of both quartets that would merit consideration in any case, but sample the viola d'amore's opening utterance at the

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beginning of track 9, and you may decide, even if you are already a confirmed admirer of Janáček's tense but richly romantic music, that a rehearing of these works is in order. ---James Manheim, Rovi

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