

George Perle – Complete Wind Quintets (1988)

Written by bluesever

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Wind Quintet No. 1 1 - I. (2:35) 2 - II. (5:30) 3 - III. (2:49) Wind Quintet No. 2 4 - I. (4:50) 5 - II. (3:48) 6 - III. (2:27)

Wind Quintet No. 3

7 - I. (*Fantasia* (3:15) 8 - II. *Scherzo* (3:43) 9 - III. *Recitative* (2:44) 10 - IV. *Finale* (3:50)

Wind Quintet No. 4 Winner of the 1986 Pulitzer Prize for Music)

11 - *Invention* (2:38) 12 - *Scherzo* (5:01) 13 - *Pastorale* (5:44) 14 - *Finale* (4:30)

The Dorian Wind Quintet: Elizabeth Mann, flute Gerard Reuter, oboe Jerry Kirkbride, clarinet David Jolley, horn Jane Taylor, bassoon

George Perle best known in Europe for his magisterial writings on Berg and his advocacy of 'twelve-tone tonality', is revealed in his wind quintets—excellently played and recorded here—as a genial, resourceful composer. Far from evoking hypertense expressionism, or abstruse serial mechanics, the works seem closer to a neo-classical idiom, though without any sense of stylistic pastiche.

The quintets are not spread evenly over Perle's career, and as if to belie the long gap between the last two, No. 4 (a Pulitzer Prize winner) begins in a manner not unlike the finale of No. 3 before proceeding to prove that Perle can still find invigorating and entertaining ways of using a by-now familiar medium.

With its fizzy scherzo and decisive finale, No. 4 certainly shows no falling off. Its "Pastorale" (at 5'44" the longest movement in all these pieces) could be over-circumspect in its refusal to allow a fully-developed melody to break free from the decorous harmonies, just as in the earlier works one occasionally yearns to be jolted by the genuinely unexpected, or confronted by a sense of danger. In this respect the scherzo of the Third Quintet is particularly rewarding in the way the clarinet, abetted by the horn, threaten to disrupt the music's cultivated manners. Here, as in all

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these quintets, there is an effective range of contrasts, and one admires the precision with which Perle brings everything into a satisfying balance at the end.' ---gramophone.co.uk

Although Perle embraced the 12-tone compositional formula devised by Arnold Schoenberg in the early 20th century, he developed his own take on the method. That gave his music its own style — at turns lyrical, thorny and witty.

"My definition of 12-tone music is not the same as those people who think that 12-tone music needs to be atonal," Perle told NPR in 1993. The composer explained his own sound in his book *Twelve-Tone Tonality*, published in 1977.

Perle also wrote extensively about Viennese composer Alban Berg, another early adopter of the 12-tone method. In the 1960s, Perle was among the first to discover that Berg's unfinished opera *Lulu* was actually more complete than anyone had previously thought. Largely due to Perle's discovery and advocacy, the final act of the opera was completed (by Friedrich Cerha), and the full three-act version received its premiere in 1979. Perle earned the Pulitzer Prize in music in 1986 for his *Wind Quintet No. 4*. That same year, he was awarded a MacArthur Genius Grant. ---Tom Huizenga, npr.org

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