

Joseph Haydn - String Quartets Op.54 (1994)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 22 October 2009 20:59 - Last Updated Sunday, 29 December 2013 21:30

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Stringquartet in C major op.54 No.2 1. *Vivace* 2. *Adagio* 3. *Menuetto – Trio* 4. *Finale. Adagio – Presto*
Stringquartet in E major op.54 No.3 1. *Allegro con brio* 2. *Largo cantabile* 3. *Menuetto – Trio* 4. *Finale. Vivace*
Stringquartet in G major op.54 No.1
1. *Allegro con brio* 2. *Allegretto* 3. *Menuatto – Trio* 4. *Finale. Presto*
Kodaly String Quartet

Haydn wrote so much music that it is sometimes difficult to believe that he could maintain such high quality for so many years in so many mediums. As much as I love his symphonies and choral works - never having been convinced by his operas - it is in his chamber works that I find most bliss and the Kodaly Quartet in their bargain series on Naxos has done as much as anyone to popularise them. Both sound quality and execution defy their super-bargain origin and they are often the first recommendation regardless of price.

So here's another treasurable issue. As was occasionally the case with Naxos in the earlier days, someone has messed up in the proofing and quality control, so the titles of movements for Quartets 1 and 2 on this Opus 54 have been reversed (although the timings are still correct); this probably happened because for some reason No.2 is programmed first. No matter; the point is the music: it is superlative and it is superlatively played.

I was looking especially for No.2 having heard it played supremely well by the newly reformed Artea Quartet at a Conway Hall Sunday Concert last week. It seems that they are as enamoured of the glorious Adagio as I instantly became on that first hearing, as they played it as an encore. The filigree embellishments and Romantic sweep are extraordinarily ahead of their time, sounding like something Mendelssohn or even Tchaikovsky might have penned. The vitality and energy of the playing here matches what I heard live and I can thoroughly

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recommend this disc. The music, written at the height of Haydn's mature genius, requires a virtuoso first violin who can scale the heights with sweetness and poise in the Vivace opening movement of No.2 and sing like a bird in that Adagio.

No. 1 is scarcely less inventive although I think No.3 has not quite the memorability and melodiousness of its two partners. No need to hesitate, though; these works are Haydn par excellence. --- Ralph Moore, amazon.com

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