

Hans Abrahamsen – String Quartets No. 1 - 4 (2017)



String Quartet No. 4 1 *I Light And Airy [High In The Sky Singing]* 6:23 2 *II With Motion [Dance Of Light]* 3:48 3 *III Dark, Heavy And Earthy [With A Heavy Groove]* 6:18 4 *IV Gently "Rocking" [With Utmost Sensitivity, Babbling]* 3:58 String Quartet No. 3
5 *I Calmo, Con Tenerezza E Semplicità* 0:59 6 *II* 5:14 7 *III* 0:51 8 *IV Molto Tranquillo Et Lontano E Legato* 4:20
String Quartet No. 2
9 *I Andante Espressivo* 3:44 10 *II Vivo, Ben Ritmico* 2:23 11 *III Tranquillo Con Delicatezza* 4:32 12 *IV Presto Energico* 5:12
10 Preludes [String Quartet No. 1]
13 1 2:30 14 2 1:14 15 3 2:21 16 4 1:27 17 5 3:21 18 6 2:12 19 7 1:28 20 8 2:51
21 9 1:56 22 10 1:17
Arditti String Quartet: Violin [1st Violin] – Irvine Arditti Violin [2nd Violin] – Ashot Sarkissjan
Viola – Ralf Ehlers Violoncello – Lucas Fels

The Dane Hans Abrahamsen represents the rare example of a composer who has pursued a steady simplification of his style apart from the main streams of American and Baltic minimalism. Many of his works take their own shapes, but his four string quartets, covering a period from 1973 to 2012 (including a ten-year period when he wrote nothing at all), refer, except for the first, to the classical, four-movement form. The development of his style is of considerable interest. Abrahamsen does not use extended technique per se, but the range of gliassandos, pizzicatos, and other unorthodox attacks, plus a good deal of music on the edge of silence, are enough to stretch the chops of top-flight string quartets. Fortunately, the Arditti String Quartet is up to the challenges, and the sound from a WDR radio studio in Cologne, is conducive to high levels of focus. The quartets are, unusually, presented in reverse chronological order, but this works wonderfully: the String Quartet No. 4 is the easiest one to follow, but all the music is recognizably the product of the same composer, and the effect of the program is to lead you into his world. Sample anywhere, perhaps starting with the third movement ("Dark, heavy and earthy") of the String Quartet No. 4. Highly recommended.
---James Manheim, AllMusic Review

Some composers identify early on with a particular genre. A quick glance at a list of works by the Dane Hans Abrahamsen seems to indicate a very different attitude. The profusion of titles suggests a mind that picks up a form, engages with it for the duration of the work itself, and then moves on to something fresh. There has been one significant exception however- the string quartet. Abrahamsen's four quartets span almost the whole of his composing career: Quartet No. 1 was composed in 1973, when Abrahamsen was in his early twenties; Quartet No. 4 appeared in 2012, as he entered his sixties. Not only so, but the quartets also draw a vital thread across the chasm at the heart of his life's work. This new release presents the aforementioned works as well as the two quartets that appeared between them, brilliantly performed by the Arditti String Quartet. ---arkivmusic.com

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