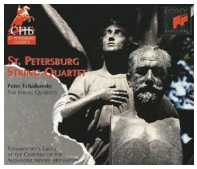
Tchaikovsky - The String Quartets (1994)



Disc: 1 String Quartet No. 1 in D major, Op. 11 *1. Moderato e simplice 2. Andante cantabile 3. Scherzo, Allegro non tanto e con fuoco 4. Finale, Allegro giusto*
String Quartet No. 3 in E flat minor, Op. 30
5. Andante sostenuto - Allegro moderato 6. Allegretto vivo e scherzando 7. Andante funebre e doloroso, ma con moto 8. Finale, Allegro non troppo e risoluto
Disc: 2 Four movements for String Quartet
1. Allegretto, for string quartet in E major 2. Allegro vivace, for string quartet in B flat major 3. Andante molto, for string quartet in G major 4. Andante ma non troppo, for string quartet in E minor
String Quartet in B flat major, op.posth.
5. String Quartet in B flat major (in 1 movement): Movement 1 6. String Quartet in B flat major (in 1 movement): Movement 2
String Quartet No. 2 in F major, Op. 22
7. Adagio - Moderato assai 8. Scherzo, Allegro giusto 9. Andante ma non tanto 10. Finale, Allegro con moto
St. Petersburg String Quartet: Alla Aranovskaya – I Violin Ilya Teplyakov – II Violin Andrei Dogadin – viola Leonid Shukaev – cello

Any Russian-born set of the Tchaikovsky string quartets has to reckon with stiff national competition from the Borodin Quartet, either of whose recordings (Melodiya/EMI or the Gramophone Award-winning Teldec) will prove the point; and although this keen young St Petersburg ensemble displays a genuine roster of virtues, comparisons incline me very much in favour of existing recommendations. However, the new collection has the distinct advantage of packaging virtually all of Tchaikovsky's quartet output on a single mid-price double-pack, and in doing so passes over the sextet Souvenir de Florence in favour of the posthumous Quartet in B flat and the very early pieces. Here again there are important comparisons to consider, this time with the Shostakovich Quartet on Olympia, who supplement the four movements (which they call 'Early Pieces') with a fifth, in D major. Completists among you might additionally complain that the Sony set does not include the rather lovely Adagio molto in E flat for string quartet and harp. At first glance, Olympia's three CDs (which are only available separately) would seem

something of an extravagance, what with fairly substantial works by Glinka and Gretchaninov thrown in as non-optional extras, but it should also be pointed out that in addition to the selections programmed by the St Petersburg Quartet the Shostakovich gives us the fifth early 'Piece' and the Souvenir de Florence. Performance-wise, the older group scores highest in the main works, whereas the new recording of the "Pieces" is actually the more sensitive and better recorded of the two.

As to the three principal works, the St Petersburg Quartet players lean rather heavily into Op. 11, they make a big sound, but the first movement lacks a sense of forward momentum and there is some ungainly tone production during the development section. An occasional tendency to rush hinders parts of the Andante cantabile whereas the finale's opening has none of the poise that the Borodin or, most especially, Hollywood Quartet (Testament, forthcoming) bring to it. Listening again to the Second Quartet confirmed its patent musical superiority over the others, at least in mind—even though this particular performance inclines to crude over-emphasis (try the clodhopping projection of that witty accordion-like passage 3'21" into the first movement) and the wistful scherzo emerges as comparatively charmless. The Third Quartet comes off best, the third movement especially- but, taken overall, the less-well recorded Shostakovich Quartet play with greater refinement and precision. The St Petersburgs are best in the slower music, where a combination of ardour and textual richness invariably holds one's attention. However, it would be both unwise and unfair to pretend that the Quartet's technical facility or interpretative insight compare with those of their strongest rival especially as heard on the Award-winning Teldec set. That certainly remains the first recommendation, with Olympia's Shostakovich series as a useful 'runner-up', primarily for those who wish to explore the varied range of Tchaikovsky's string quartet oeuvre.' --- gramophone.co.uk

download (mp3 @320 kbs):

yandex 4shared mega mediafire uloz.to cloudmailru

back