



Dmitri Shostakovich: Complete String Quartets Vol. IV

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This is the fourth volume of the set of five in this group's Shostakovich cycle. Reviews of the early quartets in ARG (by two of us) complained that the slow movements were too fast, there was little contrast, and they lacked darkness and intensity. It was Shostakovich without the gloom and brooding – and that felt unfaithful to the composer.

This volume seems much better. It may be because these later quartets tend more to play themselves – have more built-in gloom and brooding and darkness – or it may be that they feel these quartets more deeply. At any rate, I found these more than adequate and with superb sound. The performances actually seemed better than the others in my library. Of course I am happy to report that things are better, and I hope it will encourage some readers to try this series. I still think that for the earlier quartets (especially 3) there is no need to go beyond the fine Naxos series with the Eder Quartet. And the Jerusalem Quartet's two Harmonia Mundi recordings are simply wonderful (1,4,9: 901865; 6,8,11: 901953). I think recent recordings of these quartets are better than any of the older ones (Brodsky, Fitzwilliam, Manhattan, etc). It's as if great music only comes into its own after a generation has passed.