



Eduard Franck: String Quintets

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[Fanfare](#) (Jerry Dubins - 2012.05.01)

In recent years, Audite has released a series of recordings featuring the chamber and orchestral music of Eduard Franck (1817–93). This brand new SACD is the latest in a succession of discs that have given us the composer's string quartets and sextets, piano trios, violin sonatas, two violin concertos, and two symphonies. Born in the Silesian province of Breslau, he was no relation to César Franck; indeed, he was neither Belgian nor French. He was, however, father to yet another Franck, Richard (1858–1938), whose works are also being attended to by Audite.

Not unlike Mendelssohn, with whom he studied, Eduard came from a financially secure and cultured family whose home attracted such visitors as Heine, Heller, Mendelssohn, and Wagner. Franck pursued parallel careers as pianist, teacher, and composer. In the last-named capacity, he was not as prolific as a number of his more famous contemporaries, and as a self-demanding fusspot, he resisted publishing his works until he had polished them to a high degree of perfection. This resulted in much of his output not becoming known until near the end of his life, by which time his very Mendelssohnian musical vocabulary and style had been largely eclipsed by Bruckner, Liszt, Brahms, and the Belgian-French Franck, César.

Eduard's largest and most significant output falls into the category of chamber music, and being the chamber music maven I am, I've collected all of Audite's previous Franck releases. Listening to them, as well as to this latest disc of string quintets, there are two things I can state unequivocally: (1) in a game of guess-the-composer, you would not be disgraced if you guessed Mendelssohn; and (2) if you love the chamber music of that ilk—and that would include not just Mendelssohn, but the likes of Joachim Raff, Franz Lachner, Niels Gade, Louise Farrenc, Mihály Mosonyi, and that school of mid-19th-century, post-Mendelssohn composers who remained relatively untouched by the influences of Schumann, Liszt, and Brahms—you will love Eduard Franck's string quintets, as well as all of his other chamber works Audite has made available. I highly recommend them to you in toto.

The players listed in the headnote are so delightful, delectable, and delicious in these performances I could just eat them with a spoon. It's hard to imagine this music being played more spontaneously and joyfully than it is here. The E-Minor Quintet's quirky, Mendelssohnian Scherzo is gleeful and giddy, and the C-Major Quintet's gorgeous and expansive first movement unfolds its fragrant melodies like the petals of a flower, each opening in turn to seek the sun.

Audite's recording team has picked up the ensemble just right for this exceptionally clean, clear, and vibrant SACD. For those who tend to be skeptical if a piece of music was not written by a composer with a famous name, I can't urge you too strongly to give Eduard Franck a listen. This is gloriously beautiful music beyond any

telling of it.

