



Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: String Quartets in D major (Op. 44 No. 1), in E minor (Op. 44 No. 2) & in F minor (Op. 80)

aud 92.657

EAN: 4022143926579



Gramophone (Caroline Gill - 2013.02.01)

GRAMOPHONE

Disc 2 in the Mandelring's Audite Mendelssohn survey

The Mandelring Quartet's first release in their complete cycle of Mendelssohn's chamber music for strings included the Opp 12 and 13 Quartets (10/12) that so closely examine the relationship with his sister Fanny and their joint interest in Beethoven's late quartets. At the time, therefore, it was frustrating not to have his Op 80 (the 'Requiem fur Fanny'), appearing at their side to illustrate all they shared and everything he missed so intensely when she died. The second volume, though, does contain Op 80, so all is forgiven – kindling a sneaking suspicion that this will be a cycle to collect disc-by-disc and treasure as definitive once it's complete, especially with playing that maintains and deepens the integrity they showed in that initial volume. There is a constant sense of their conviction here: the Haydnesque character of the Op 44 quartets in particular they honour with great authenticity, simply through the clarity with which they outline the counterpoint between the inner parts and the altogether cheerier disposition it sports in comparison to Op 80.

There is enough ego in Mendelssohn's own writing, though, and the Mandelrings are consummately mature in how they keep his ebullient, youthful emotion under control through the perfection of their tuning and modesty in their phrasing, whether it be in the poised but excitable Op 44 – Mendelssohn's first anxious foray into proper grown-up life after the death of his father and his own marriage – or the grief-racked Op 80, where the ambitious speed of the opening movement pushes itself to such limits that it might sound out of control under other fingers but here succeeds only in emphasising the emotional desperation behind the notes.