



Dmitri Shostakovich: Complete String Quartets Vol. II

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American Record Guide (Vroon - 2008.01.01)

The first is simple to review, because it is so different from all other recordings. There are no slow movements here. Markings like Adagio, Lento, and Largo all mean Andante to these people. So there is none of the dark, brooding Shostakovich. Instead he is rather agitated all the time. There is a feminine quality to the playing – anxious and self-conscious, sometimes even frantic.

So: do you want to hear Shostakovich done that way? I compared with the Jerusalem Quartet on Harmonia Mundi and the Eder Quartet on Naxos, and I am sure I do not want to hear it this way. Nor does the SACD sound make the slightest difference: I prefer the sound of both the others. This may be the first Shostakovich quartet series on SACD, but that doesn't matter. I see that another ARG reviewer rejected their earlier recording (of 1, 2, and 4) because they lack the darkness and intensity Shostakovich needs (Nov/Dec 2006). Right.

The Jupiter Quartet is less technically precise than the Mandelring and more emotionally involved. I find the playing rough and hardhitting. I want more beauty, more vibrato, a more refined sound. The sound is also too close-up. At least the Adagio is an adagio. In fact, tempos are rather slow, but with such strong (even brutal) attacks it seems faster. The Eder on Naxos will give you the best Shostakovich Quartet 3 you can hear.