Martin Held

The RIAS Amadeus Quartet Haydn Recordings

Joseph Haydn

5CD aud 21.426

WDR 3 TonArt | 21.04.2017 | 15.05-17.45 Uhr (Marcus Stäbler - 2017.04.21)
source: http://www1.wdr.de/mediathek/audio/wdr3/...

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ClicMag N° 50 Juin 2017 (Jean-Charles Hoffelé - 2017.06.01)

Derrière la perfection formelle, l'intonation parfaite, c'est Haydn qui parait dans toute ses prospectives.

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Gramophone June 2017 (Rob Cowan - 2017.06.01)
source:
https://reader.exacteditions.com/issues/...

Three more first-release recordings arrive via Audité's latest volume of Deutschlandradio Kultur recordings by the Amadeus Quartet, this batch devoted entirely to Haydn, and including works that the Amadeus never recorded commercially: Opp 9/3, 20/5 and 33/2 (The Joke). For the last, the Amadeus cut a forceful profile in the scherzo and make an affectionate beeline for the gentle 'joke' at the close of the finale. Their playing of the F minor Quartet (Op 20/5) suggests implied parallels with Mozart's G minor Quintet in the scherzo, while the lilting Adagio is given the loveliest reading imaginable. The C major Quartet Op 54 No 2 features a brief Adagio that can only be described as cantorial: the solo violin wails expressively over supportive chords, the effect not unlike the 'beklemmt' passage in Beethoven's Cavatina (the Quartet Op 130). We're given a complete recording of the Quartet from 1969 and that movement alone as recorded in 1950, both extraordinarily moving. Fifteen works are included overall (the majority originating in Haydn's later period), including The Seven Last Words which is additionally available as a downloadable 'extended version' with German texts. An unmissable collection.

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www.artalinna.com 27 May 2017 (Jean-Charles Hoffelé - 2017.05.27)
source: http://www.artalinna.com/?p=7471

Plutôt que Mozart

Derrière la perfection formelle, l'intonation parfaite, c'est Haydn qui parait dans toute ses prospectives.

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www.pizzicato.lu 28/06/2017 (Uwe Krusch - 2017.06.28)
source: https://www.pizzicato.lu/haydn-zu-spiele...

Haydn zu spielen ist ein Seiltanz

Haydns Streichquartette und das 'Amadeus Quartett', zwei Themen, die nicht so super zusammenpassen wollen. Die vier Musiker waren sich bewusst, dass Haydn zu spielen ein Seiltanz ist. Die Musik wirkt so einfach, und der oberflächliche Hörer meint, alle Quartette seien gleich. Der Experte weiß, dass jedes Quartett von Haydn einen eigenen Charakter hat.

Trotzdem hat das 'Amadeus Quartett' sich nur partiell mit Haydns Quartetten beschäftigt. Insbesondere die späten und reifen Werke wurden gespielt. Von den frühen Kompositionen wurden nur einzelne aufgeführt.

Für die vorliegenden Radioaufnahmen hat das Quartett etliche Stücke zum ersten Mal eingeübt und eingespielt. Insofern ist diese Kollektion ein interessantes historisches Dokument von besonderem Wert.

Die Interpretation ist dagegen aus heutiger Sicht nicht mehr so ganz aktuell. Natürlich legen die vier eine ausgefeilte Deutung vor, doch mit dem heutigen Wissen und den Entwicklungen durch die historisch informierte Aufführungspraxis sind wir an ein anderes Klangideal gewöhnt.

Am Beispiel des letzten Werkes, der 'Sieben letzten Worte des Erlösers am Kreuze', ist zu konstatieren, dass das Stück ohne den denkbaren Tiefgang und die Feinheit im Detail etwas zu öffentlichkeitswirksam gespielt wird. Wer das Glück hatte, das Abschiedskonzert des 'Lindsay Quartet' in Echternach vor 13 Jahren zu hören, der weiß, dass auch bei einem älteren Quartett eine wunderbar intime, private Deutung quasi mit Ausschluss des Publikums möglich war.

The Amadeus Quartet performs a selection of Haydn quartets. Some pieces were rehearsed and performed the first time by the Amadeus for this radio recording. But the performances are trapped in their time. Today, with all the knowledge provided by the historically informed playing, we are used to another sound ideal. Therefore, this collection is an essentially an interesting historic document.

Diapason N° 659 Juillet-Août 2017 (Jean-Michel Molkhou - 2017.07.01)

C'est par ce sixième volume, intégralement consacré à Haydn, qu'Audite clôt sa prodigieuse série dédiée aux enregistrements du Quatuor Amadeus réalisés pour la RIAS entre 1950 et 1969. Inédites au disque, ces bandes ont enrichi de façon considérable la discographie du légendaire ensemble (cf. nOS 618, 622, 626, 631 et 654). Elles nous sont d'autant plus précieuses qu'on y découvre trois quatuors (Opus 9 nO 3, Opus 20 nO 5, Opus 33 nO 2) dont ils n'ont pas laissé de trace officielle au disque.

Bien que, dans ces témoignages de jeunesse (1951-1952), leur expression n'ait pas encore atteint son plein épanouissement, on y reconnaît déjà (presque) tout ce qui fera la légende des Amadeus : le vibrato de Brainin, leur science de l'agencement des voix et leur volupté instinctive à faire chanter les lignes, tout comme ce zeste d'impatience qui donne une formidable impulsion à leurs archets (finale de l'Opus 74 nO 1). Ces enregistrements ne présentent pas encore la touche d'abandon et la liberté si caractéristiques de leur maturité, mais déjà une poésie divinement organisée et une suprême justesse de goût. Comparaison et confirmation dans les deux versions (1950/1969) du miraculeux Adagio de l'Opus 54 nO 2, qui permettent de mesurer le chemin parcouru. En suivant le fil de ces interprétations, on réalise que l'évolution expressive fut rapide car dès le milieu des années 1950 (Opus 64 nO 3) on reconnaît la grâce, les touches de fantaisie (Menuetto) comme cette irrésistible façon de livrer leur émotion (Adagio) qui feront leur gloire. Plus on avance dans le temps plus leur signature devient claire (Opus 64 nO 4), par les timbres,les vibratos, la vocalité (Adagio) ou la manière de faire respirer les barres de mesure. Ecoutez notamment leur magistrale lecture de l'Opus 77, dans lesquels ils traduisent si clairement la transition entre les langages du XVIIIe et du XIXe siècles (le finale de l'Opus 77 nO 2 est époustouflant). C'est avec les Sept Paroles, dans une vision empreinte de grandeur et de solennité, captée deux ans après leur première gravure officielle pour Westminster, que se conclut cet envoûtant périple en nous laissant un sentiment d'éternité.

www.musicweb-international.com Tuesday August 22nd (Jonathan Woolf - 2017.08.22)
source: http://www.musicweb-international.com/cl...

The sixth volume in Audite's survey of the Amadeus Quartet's RIAS broadcasts covers a two-decade period between 1950 and 1969 and focuses securely on the Haydn quartets. Lest this seem merely peripheral or ancillary to the ensemble's commercial discography it should be pointed out that of the fourteen quartets and the quartet version of The Seven Last Words included in the box, three of the quartets were never recorded by the Amadeus in the studio: Op.9 No.3, Op.20 No.5 and Op.33 No.2. That is certainly reason enough for considering this 5-CD collection.

Audite have taken the decision to programme the quartets chronologically so that the trio of previously unrecorded quartets appear on the very first CD. This also means that a work recorded in 1951 can be followed by one taped in 1969 which is itself followed by something from 1950. It's fortunate that the engineers achieved so high a standard throughout the sequence, so that the switch between years is not jarring. Op.9 No.3 is quite taut and forward-moving in the opening, possibly more Allegro than Moderato as marked whilst Brainin's concertante role in the Menuet is played with rich sweetness. The Adagio in Op. 20 No.5 is beautifully cantilevered, songfully expressive with the decorate first violin flourishes dexterously dispatched. Op.33 No.3, nicknamed The Joke, goes so well in this performance that one wonders why it was so seldom played and never recorded by the quartet. These are the many highlights of the first disc but one shouldn't omit the rapt slow movement of Op. 54 No.2 which is heard in two contexts – firstly in a performance of the quartet from 1969 and as an appendix, as an isolated movement in a broadcast from June 1950.

Though one now moves into terra cognita from the second disc onwards there are always changes in emphasis or breadth when considering these broadcast performances in the context of the DG legacy. So,

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for instance, the 1956 reading of Op.64 No.3 is more tightly charged than the later 1973 studio reading and so too is the slow movement of Op.64 No.4 from 1959. There's just a little bit of an edge to the corporate sound in the November 1951 recording of Op.74 No.1 but it sounds altogether more committed than the tamer-sounding DG LP. I happen to find the tempo of this 1957 reading of the slow movement of The Rider, Op.74 No.3, preferable to the significantly slower but beautifully voiced DG. The group's readings of Opp.76 and 77 were always amongst their very best and Op.76 No.1 is no exception. There's little to choose between this 1960 performance and the commercial recording, as the slow movement is beautiful in both cases. The bucolic pizzicati in the succeeding Menuet work equally well here, as indeed does the buoyant and nobly conceived reading of the Emperor, recorded in April 1951. Like the studio performance, the slow movement of The Sunrise is quite expansive. Disc four reveals an Op.77 No.1 that's slightly more mellow sounding than the shriller DG recording. Warmer, wittier and a lot less acidic this is a real improvement on that commercial legacy. Though the 1950 sound is not of the best, the performance of Op.77 No.2 is laudable with an especially touching and solemn close to the Andante. The Seven Last Words dates from December 1952 and its meditative beauties are perfectly conveyed in this reading. Note that an extended version with the German texts is available as a free download via Audite.

A well-crafted booklet, in German and English, reinforces the novelty of those three early quartets and the fact that all the performances are making their first ever commercial appearance here. All this makes this box of high importance to admirers of this august group.

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