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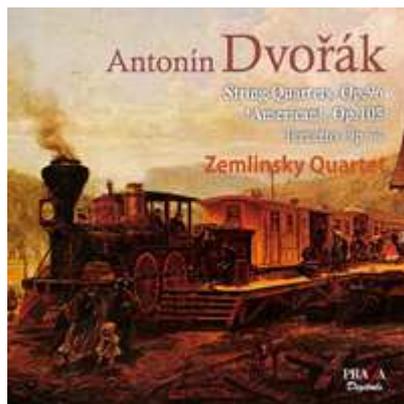
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Serial: PRD/DSD 250 300

Title: Dvorak: String Quartets Opp.96 "American" & 105, Terzetto Op.74 - Zemlinsky Quartet

Dvorak: String Quartets Opp.96 "American" & 105; Terzetto Op.74

Description:
Zemlinsky Quartet

Track listing:

Genre: Classical - Chamber

Content: Stereo/Multichannel

Media: Hybrid

Recording type: DSD

Recording info: DSD multichannel recorded in Prague, May 2013.

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Reviews: 2

[add review](#)Site review by [Polly Nomial](#) January 6, 2014

Performance: Sonics:

If one were to be pushed, this would probably be the answer to "if you could only have one disc on SACD of Dvorak's chamber music, which would it be?" at the time of writing.

Happily, this features Dvorak's most famous quartet (the 'American') and also arguably his greatest quartet (Op. 105) together with the wonderful Terzetto. The disc opens with the 'American' and immediately, one is gripped by how very different an approach the Zemlinsky Quartet adopts compared to [Dvorak/Smetana - Tokyo String Quartet](#) in their last issued recording before retiring. The Tokyo quartet take the tempo suggestions more literally in the outer movements; their account is certainly more "ma non troppo" than the Zemlinsky's but one never feels rushed by these players. In general, the Zemlinsky's are marginally more urgent in every movement (they take nearly 1'30 less than the Tokyo Quartet) and in the finale, this leads to some daring rubato that a few might find a little exaggerated - most though will be caught up in the sheer joie de vivre of this account (they manage to find an almost Haydn-esque sense of comedy here). One aspect that is markedly different between the accounts is the sound of the quartets; to borrow vocabulary from wine, the Zemlinsky's are a slender, soft white wine whereas the Tokyo bring a red wine that is rich, velvety to the table. Both are appealing in their unique ways; the ending to the slow movement here is more barren, the Tokyo's more comforting. The other difference is that the Tokyo Quartet are playing "for themselves" whereas this account is more daring, probing the extremes of expression and is as though the Zemlinsky's had dashed from the concert platform to set down this performance.

In the A-flat major quartet, an absolute masterpiece of quartet writing by Dvorak, there is more competition from [Haydn, Bacewicz, Dvorak: String Quartets - Szymanowski Quartet](#) and [Dvorak: String Quartets Opp. 105 & 106 - Martinu Quartet](#). The Martinu Quartet, sadly, lose the shape of longer line & formal structure and as a result, one of Dvorak's most thematically integrated scores sounds fragmented. The Szymanowski Quartet offer a much finer account than the Martinu's, the experience is similarly enjoyable, although perhaps a bit more straight-laced. Here, perhaps more than in the American, the decision of the Zemlinsky Quartet to have the violinists opposite one another is a huge bonus for the listener - the passing of the thematic material is both clearer and more unified at once. As in the 'American', there is a daring sense of rubato at play in the outer movements, yet the structure of the music is kept a coherent whole. The Molto vivace (a sort of furiant) second movement is a delight in these hands with all the rhythms caressed into a tumult of dancing; the trio section is very tenderly and passionately played. In contrast to the faster movements, the Zemlinsky Quartet wisely decide to adopt a simpler, more lyrical approach (not that they become inexpressive) and the rubato is applied over longer timescales to great effect.

To round off the disc off, the Zemlinsky Quartet offer up a passionate account of the Terzetto; certainly more heightened contrasts on display here compared to [Dvorak: String Sextet & Terzettos "3 x 2 = 6" - Aurnyn Quartet and friends](#) although the sonic presentation is, as a concert hall seating, far less avant garde than the Tacet offering. There is a keener sense of electricity in the Zemlinsky account, not just in the faster movements but in the slower ones as well where the sense of ebb and flow combine to create a more varied level of tension (and one that is greater overall because of this).

The sound is a lovely concert hall presentation and is both clear and rounded albeit not as transparent as one might ideally experience - please don't let that put you off from obtaining a wonderful disc of music making though!

A lovely disc.

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Review by [JJ](#) September 1, 2013 (4 of 6 found this review helpful)

Performance: Sonics:

The String Quartet marked Anton Dvorak's entire life, and it was in 1893 in the United States that he composed his twelfth String Quartet Op.96 in F major, called "American." "Strictly contemporary with the Quartet by Debussy which looked towards the orient and tonal scales," states Bernard Fournier, "the 'American' Quartet looked towards the west and pentatonic scales, a coincidence which well shows that composers that everything separated were looking, each one in his own way, to renew the expressive means of the quartet by engaging it on the road to the exotic, in the larger sense: it was not about importing folk elements, but rather about escaping the implicit dictatorship of Viennese music." The String Quartet N°14 Op.105 was composed in 1895 and is made up of four movements. The Terzetto in C major Op.74 B 148 for two violins and alto, dating from 1887, also presents four movements of which in the second, a Larghetto, "the alto play the role of baritone at times, accompanist at others, simulating the left hand of an imaginary keyboard. The tonal splendor of the two voices often presented in canon is a thrill music lovers hadn't heard since the duets of Hayden and Mozart" (Pierre-Emile Barbier). To celebrate their twentieth year together, the Zemlinsky Quartet here offers with this recording another wonder in honor of Czech music, and an exemplary SACD of sonic beauty.

Jean-Jacques Millo
Translation Lawrence Schulman

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Works: 3

[Antonin Dvorak - String Quartet No. 12 in F major, B. 179 Op. 96 "American"](#)

[Antonin Dvorak - String Quartet No. 14 in A flat major, B. 193 Op. 105](#)

[Antonin Dvorak - Terzetto for 2 violins & viola in C major, B. 148 Op. 74](#)

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