



09/08-(6)

Title:
Jörg Widmann (*1973)
String Quartets Nr. 1-5

Musicians:
Juliane Banse, soprano
Leipziger Streichquartett

1 CD

Order Number:
MDG 307 1531-2

UPC-Code:



Compositional Discipline

At eleven, his first instruction in composition; at twenty-four, his first string quartet; at thirty, his second; and since then one work has followed the next: Jörg Widmann, who has accumulated impressive career credits as a clarinetist, has now also established himself in the ultimate musical discipline of composing. The thirty-five-year-old's five-part string quartet cycle is now complete, and its recording premiere by the Leipzig String Quartet and Juliane Banse is magnificent in every sense of the word. An absolute listening must!

Cyclical Beginnings

Widmann approaches his subject more by groping than with the stormy drive of youth. He begins by having the bows apply the greatest pressure to the strings but without producing a single tone. Then two gently reverberating flageolet tones emerge in the form of musical islands pervaded by peace. The viola alone bursts forth, setting its stakes on liberation; it is the *primus inter pares*, and it is only with difficulty that the other strings succeed in catching up with it.

Midcourse Shifts

The slow tempo of Haydn's *Seven Words* seems to form the background fascination for the idea behind Widmann's second string quartet: "an almost autistically enigmatic music seeming to write nothing but question marks on the wall." The third quartet is all the more temperamental; Widmann elaborates a hunting theme from Schumann and pursues it to death, producing what amounts to an irate scherzo.

The fourth quartet operates with the simplest means but is extremely difficult to play and technically the most challenging of the five works. Pizzicato, "impacted with the finger," *col legno* – playing style and tone color change with each note. And all of this requires, for its equally fascinating rendering, a world-class ensemble like the Leipzig String Quartet.

Fugal Finish

The fifth string quartet, "Attempt at the Fugue," is the longest of the whole cycle and sets itself the highest musical goals in its testing of a whole varied range of polyphonic forms. Juliane Banse's dramatic and enthralling citation of the biblical "Vanitas vanitatum" supplies an additional voice and a tonal extension.

String Quartets by Opera composers

Richard Wagner, Albumblatt
Giacomo Puccini, Crisantemi
Ottorino Respighi, Il tramento
Giuseppe Verdi, String Quartet
Engelbert Humperdinck, String Quartet
with Ruth Ziesak, soprano
MDG 307 1495-2

André Caplet, Conte fantastique
Claude Debussy, String Quartet
Gabriel Fauré, String Quartet
with Marie-Pierre Langlamet, harp
MDG 307 1430-2

