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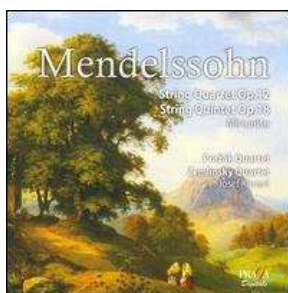
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Mendelssohn: String Quartet Op. 12; String Quintet Op. 18

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Performance ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Release Date 2009
Time 58:56
Label Praga[250252]

Genre
Chamber

AMG Album ID
W 188995

Corrections to this Entry?

Review

by James Leonard

Recordings of Mendelssohn's string quartets had become plentiful by the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty first, but recordings of the German Romantic's string quintets remained relatively rare, so this splendid 2009 Supraphon release of his A major String Quintet, including its original second movement, coupled with his E flat major String Quartet, will be welcomed by the composer's advocates and enthusiasts. Both works are performed by Czech groups -- the Prazák Quartet in the quartet and the Zemlinsky Quartet plus second violist Josef Kluson in the quintet -- and both performances are top-notch, with the sweetness and lyricism Czech groups are known for, plus the relentless drive and strong but agile ensemble that Mendelssohn's string writing demands. The Prazák's E flat major Quartet is poised and confident, with tremendous depths of feeling in the Canzonetta and the following Andante espressivo, while the Zemlinsky's A major Quintet is simply magnificent. With their fusion of muscular rhythms, cogent structures, and convincing rhetoric, the outer movements are models of musical development in the years immediately following Beethoven's death. The central movements -- an Andante sostenuto Intermezzo that's both restless and consoling, and a Scherzo that starts like a Bach fugue that turns magically into an elfin Scherzo -- are excellent examples of what the young composer was capable of. The Zemlinsky's choice to include the Minuetto in F sharp minor, the quintet's original second movement later replaced by Intermezzo, shows that this piece is too heavy and dark to match the character of the rest of the quintet, and that Mendelssohn made the right decision in replacing it. Supraphon's super audio sound is clean and evocative, a perfect combination. Details are clearly audible, and it sounds like the music is taking place all around you.



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