

## QUARTETTO ENERGIE NOVE



Il Quartetto Energie Nove nasce dall'incontro di quattro prime parti dell'Orchestra della Svizzera italiana. Musicisti di provenienza internazionale, vincitori di numerosi concorsi, con alle spalle esperienze professionali di altissimo livello, si sono ritrovati per condividere la passione per il quartetto con l'intento di trasmettere l'ideale comune di vivere la musica come ricerca creativa e stimolante. Il Quartetto Energie Nove prende in prestito il nome da una rivista letteraria italiana dei primi anni del Novecento di Piero Gobetti, che ben esprime il carattere del quartetto e le loro finalità.

Lo stretto rapporto con la Radio della Svizzera italiana gli ha permesso di registrare i quartetti di Sergej Prokof'ev che sono pubblicati per l'etichetta Dynamic con la quale è in prossima uscita una nuova incisione con i quartetti di Leoš Janáček.

Sempre in collaborazione con la RSI hanno in programma una serie di trasmissioni dedicate alla storia del quartetto d'archi dove eseguiranno diversi quartetti in diretta radiofonica.

Il Quartetto Energie Nove ha aperto anche una collaborazione con la Televisione Svizzera con la quale ha registrato i quartetti op.74 e op. 95 di Beethoven e nel prossimo progetto televisivo

saranno impegnati in quintetto con il pianista Alexander Lonquich. Ultimamente hanno anche collaborato con il pianista Ivo Pogorelich per una serie di concerti dedicati a Fryderyc Chopin.

Impegnati in un'intensa attività concertistica, hanno ricevuto consensi di critica e di pubblico nell'ultima tournée in Germania e al Festival di Edinburgo. Prossimamente il quartetto sarà presente con due concerti per MiTo, alla Società dei concerti di Milano e per il ciclo dei quartetti di Šostakovič per la GOG di Genova.

In occasione del centocinquantesimo anniversario dei rapporti diplomatici tra l'Italia e la Svizzera, sono stati invitati dal Consolato Generale svizzero a Milano per un concerto straordinario, dove sono stati affidati loro i preziosi strumenti custoditi dal "Centro di musicologia Walter Stauffer" di Cremona. I violini Guarneri del Gesù e Ceruti, una viola Amati e un violoncello Stradivari.

Il Quartetto è formato da Hans Liviabella, Barbara Ciannamea, Ivan Vukčević e Felix Vogelsang i quali suonano rispettivamente i violini di Ferdinando Gagliano (1764) e Carlo Giuseppe Testore (1710), una viola di Joseph Gagliano (1789) e un violoncello di Don Nicolò Amati (1730).





## RECENSIONI

### CLASSICAL.NET Serge Prokofieff Quartetto Energie Nove



#### **Works for String Quartet**

- String Quartet #1 in B minor, Op. 50
- *Visions Fugitives*, Op. 22
- String Quartet #2 in F Major, Op. 92

#### **Dynamic CDS726 69m**

This appears to be the first recording from the Quartetto Energie Nove, a group consisting of principal players from the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, based in Lugano, Switzerland (Hans Liviabella & Barbara Ciannamea, violins; Ivan Vukcevic, viola; and Felix Vogelsang, cello). The biographical information provided in the Dynamic album booklet does not divulge the date of the group's formation, but it was apparently fairly recent. The members all appear to be young, perhaps in their early thirties, but all perform as part of a seasoned ensemble, with a good collective sense of their own individual sonic and interpretive style. In general the QEN play with an impressive technique, a crispness in their attacks, very accurate intonation, and with an unsentimental approach in lyrical sections. Long lines can sound songful or fluent alright, but the players generally don't linger over them or convey a strong sense of warmth or sumptuousness.

The QEN deliver fairly brisk performances of the Prokofiev Quartets here, but the tempos work just fine. In the more energetic music of #1's first two movements and the outer movements of #2, their livelier and faster tempos infuse a vitality to the music that is quite necessary to bring it off effectively. Most of the music in these quartets is light but not necessary joyful. Of course, the complex and dark finale of the First is anything but light and, moreover, there isn't even a glimmer of joy in it. Indeed, but for all its gloom it is arguably one of the most profound chamber creations ever written by Prokofiev.

In the First Quartet (1930) the QEN appropriately impart an athletic character to the first movement, and while they maintain a mostly light mood in the second movement, they deftly capture the somewhat darkening sense of the music. Their finale is filled with tension and

grimness, but unlike some groups they make no attempt to soften the music's unyielding sense of quiet desperation, of its inexorable descent to a decidedly unhappy conclusion.

The Second Quartet (1941) aptly comes across as happy, confident, ebullient – and, in the second movement, colorfully exotic. Prokofiev rarely relied on folk sources in his works, but in this quartet he employs an array of folk themes of Kabardin-Balkar origin. In this fine performance by the QEN the first movement is appropriately chipper and rugged, while the second movement, with that catchy, exotic main theme, is unforgettable. The finale has the necessary joyful bounce and playful menace in the outer sections, as well as a sense of harrowing sadness in the middle section, perhaps the only truly grim moment in this otherwise cheerful quartet. You wonder sometimes how Prokofiev could write such generally happy music at this time: his country was at war and he, Shostakovich and other major Soviet composers had been relocated from the war zones to Nalchik, part of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic. There these composers wrote various works including some patriotic music.

The arrangement of the *Visions Fugitives* (1915-17), a work of twenty short piano pieces that has become one of Prokofiev's more popular keyboard collections, is a reasonably imaginative effort here. Many may be unaware that Prokofiev originally intended the *Visions Fugitives* for orchestra, but never made an orchestral version. Musicologists and critics have typically seemed wary of non-keyboard versions of the work, believing it utterly native to the piano, quite the opposite of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, which seems to call out for orchestral treatment. Rudolf Barshai fashioned a string orchestra rendition of *Visions Fugitives* and Walter Susskind made an orchestral version. This quartet arrangement was fashioned by Sergei Samsonov. Throughout the work the QEN play with somewhat less brisk tempos than in the quartets: a typical piano performance of the work lasts about twenty-two minutes, but here the timing is just over twenty-five. Thus, Prokofiev's lyrical moments here are milked a little more than you might expect, most notably in Nos. 1, 7, 17, 18 and 20. Also, the livelier music is often less headlong, as in Nos. 3, 6, 8 and 11). Many numbers stand out in this performance: Nos. 4 and 15 are especially vehement and driven; #5 is deliciously tart and blunt; #9 is delightfully sassy and playful; #16 is powerfully atmospheric in its mystery and mournfulness; and #19 is frenzied and fearful, but a joy to hear! All in all, this work makes a fine filler on the disc.

The sound is very close-up and vivid, but be aware that at higher volume levels the instruments can sometimes sound shrill. The notes are informative. There have been excellent performances of the Prokofiev quartets by the Chiligirian Quartet (Chandos CHAN8929, but with no filler), the Aurora Quartet (Naxos 8.553136), and among older recordings, the Novak Quartet (Philips) and Britten Quartet (the now defunct Collins Classics 1189-2). This one on Dynamic is at least as good as the best of them and has an interesting bonus in the addition of the *Visions Fugitives* arrangement.

## REVIEWS

The Strad's experts evaluate the latest string recordings

**Prokofiev: String quartets no.1 op.50 & no.2 op.92,**

**Visions fugitives op.22 (arr. Samsonov)**

Electrifying performances that tap the music's inventiveness

Saturday, 11 May 2013



### **Musicians**

**Energie Nove Quartet**

### **Composer**

**Prokofiev**

### **DYNAMIC CDS 726**

Prokofiev's quartets have tended to remain on the outer fringes of the central performing repertoire: a consequence of his wide-ranging stylistic terms of reference, dazzlingly hyperactive changes of musical direction and intimidating pyrotechnical demands. All of which makes these engrossing accounts from the Energie Nove Quartet – a young ensemble composed of four competition-winning players who are currently section principals with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana – particularly welcome. Throughout even the thorniest passages they retain absolute technical composure, knifeedge ensemble and remarkable intonational accuracy.

If the general tendency in this music is to play cool with the music's essentially neo-Classical profile, the Energie Nove players throw themselves gleefully into the fray, clearly believing in every

note. Relishing the music's bracing inventiveness and chameleon-like changes of mood, they play with an electrifying frisson that provides a vital musical bridge between the impassioned middle-period masterpieces of Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich's agonising introspection.

Music that often appears to lack a strong sense of structural cohesion feels utterly compelling and inevitable here.

Sergei Samsonov's inspired quartet realisation of the *Visions fugitives* provides the perfect coupling, and the detailed yet full-bodied recording captures these outstanding performances superbly.

JULIAN HAYLOCK

# Arkiv Music

## THE SOURCE FOR CLASSICAL MUSIC



### **Prokofiev: Quartets No 1 & 2, Visions Fugitives / Quartetto Energie Nova**

**Release Date:** 03/26/2013

**Label:** Dynamic **Catalog #:** 726

**Composer:** Sergei Prokofiev

**Orchestra/Ensemble:** Quartetto Energie Nova

PROKOFIEV String Quartets: No. 1 in b; No. 2 in F. Visions fugitives (arr. S. Samsonov) • Energie Nove  
Qrt •DYNAMIC 726 (69:31)

The Italian label Dynamic seems to be re-energizing itself (pun intended) with a roster of new and unfamiliar artists. First it was a recording of Bach's *French Suites* with a harpsichordist new to *Fanfare*, Alessandra

Read more  
To repeat what I've said many times before, we are blessed to be living in a golden age of string playing, and the Quartetto Energie Nove is but yet another manifestation of our blessings. Most performances of Prokofiev's First String Quartet start off with an appropriately jaunty stride of cockeyed optimism. But Energie Nove's players spring forth, jack-in-the-box like, with a mischievous alacrity. Their first movement timing, 6:39, leaves the St. Petersburg Quartet (on Delos), at 7:43, in the dust. They're even faster than the Emerson Quartet at 7:05 and the Chilingrian Quartet (on Chandos) at 7: 01.

In the *Andante*, the timings are reversed, with Energie Nove being slightly slower and more probing than any of the above-cited three versions, while in the last movement—the one Prokofiev himself arranged for string orchestra—Energie Nove's timing is very close to the others, but its playing is sharper edged. The effect, to recall the previous pun, is to energize the music in a way I've not heard it played before. Admittedly, I've not heard the recent version by the Pavel Haas



Quartet on Supraphon, which was very highly rated by Boyd Pomeroy in 33:6 and Want Listed by Bart Verhaeghe in 34:2.

Prokofiev was close to 40 when he wrote his first of only two string quartets in 1930. The work was commissioned by the Library of Congress, where it was first performed the following year. The composer's Second Quartet, in F Major, was written a decade later and under very different circumstances. By 1941, Prokofiev was back in Moscow, but not for long. When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, he, along with several other artists the government deemed "high value" assets, was whisked away to the safety of Nalchik, a town some 900 miles south of Moscow. It was here that the composer was asked (ordered, would be more accurate) to write a string quartet based on the Karbadino-Balkar folk tunes and rhythms of the indigenous tribal peoples of this North Caucasus region.

One would think that having to produce a work on-demand like that would not motivate a composer to his best efforts, but Prokofiev became quite intrigued by the native folk music he'd been directed to incorporate into his new quartet, and he ended up composing a very attractive and, in some ways, more emotionally stirring score than that of his First Quartet. Again, *Energie Nove* plays with consummate technical authority and real feeling for the music's folk idioms.

Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives*, 20 short pieces the composer wrote for piano between 1915 and 1917, performed here in an arrangement for string quartet by Sergei Samsonov, is perhaps a bit of an odd choice as a complement to the two string quartets, but the sad fact (our loss) is that Prokofiev didn't really compose much chamber music. These two string quartets, a Quintet for mixed winds and strings, a couple of sonatas for violin and piano, a Sonata for cello and piano, a Sonata for two violins, and a Sextet, better known as *Overture on Hebrew Themes*, are about the extent of it, unless one counts a few miscellaneous pieces for violin and piano and for cello and piano. Though the *Visions fugitives* string quartet arrangement is not in Prokofiev's hand, it makes more sense to me as a disc filler than does the Emerson Quartet's choice of the two-violin sonata—the identical program offered by the Pavel Haas Quartet—or the St. Petersburg Quartet's choice of a not very appealing 1985 string quartet by Georgian composer Zurab Nadarejshvili. And *Energie Nove*'s choice is certainly preferable to the Chilingrian Quartet's filler on Chandos, which is nothing, a 43-minute disc I'm now retiring from my collection.

I'm hoping to hear a lot more from Quartetto *Energie Nove* in the future. Meanwhile, this new Prokofiev offering is strongly recommended.

**FANFARE: Jerry Dubins**