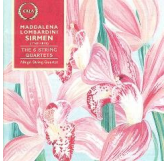


Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen - The Six String Quartets (1994)

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1. String Quartet No.4 in B flat Major: i. Cantabile 7:57 2. String Quartet No.4 in B flat Major: ii. Minuetto 1:54 3. String Quartet No.3 in G Minor: i. Tempo Giusto 6:24 4. String Quartet No.3 in G Minor: ii. Allegro - Sostenuto - Allegro - Sostenuto 5:04 5. String Quartet No.6 in E Major: i. Andantino 6:18 6. String Quartet No.6 in E Major: ii. Con brio - Minuetto - Con brio 3:42 7. String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major: i. Andante ma con un poco di moto 6:14 8. String Quartet No.1 in E flat Major: ii. Allegretto 6:05 9. String Quartet No.5 in F Minor: i. Larghetto - Allegro - Larghetto 8:11 10. String Quartet No.5 in F Minor: ii. Minuetto 4:23 11. String Quartet No.2 in B flat Major: i. Andantino 7:08 12. String Quartet No.2 in B flat Major: ii. Allegro 5:01 Allegri String Quartet: Peter Carter, David Roth - Violin Roger Tapping - Viola Bruno Schrecker - Cello

Sirmen (1745-1818) was renowned in her day as a virtuoso violinist (a pupil of Tartini), a fine soprano and excellent composer. Starting as an inmate of a Venetian orphanage specialising in musical education, she toured Europe as both singer and violinist to great acclaim, and had her music published in both Paris and London. She is one of the earliest known female musicians to succeed without the social and financial advantages of being a member of the nobility, and without the connections consequent on coming from a family headed by a composer.

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As some of the earliest string quartets, these two-movement works have curiosity value guaranteed. But in their expressive range and even their turns of phrase, they come closer to the mature style of Mozart than his better-known, more Germanic precursors. And that is not so improbable, for their composer was a travelling violin virtuoso and singer, and the Mozart family knew her music. Maddalena Lombardini studied at one of the Venetian ospedali, where Vivaldi

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had once taught, and did most of her composing before she married a fellow musician, Lodovico Sirmen, in 1767. While the Classical style was emerging, forms were often free and experimental. Sirmen's distinction is that the shape of each movement grows logically from the material: form, feeling and drama (of which there is quite a bit) are one. Most of the opening movements are steady in pace and quite elaborate – a couple of them approach full-scale sonata structures. But their successors are highly individual: in No. 3 an Allegro alternates with a slow, sicilienne-type dance, and (predictably) major with minor; No. 6 inserts a complete minuet into a quick finale; No. 5 brings back the first movement's intense slow introduction as a link. Resonant recording, vibrant playing. ---Robert Maycock, classical-music.com

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