

## Mozart

### Serenade in C, K648 'A Very Little Night Music'

Leonhard Baumgartner, Margarita Pochebut (violin), Svenja Dose (double bass), Oscar Jockel (harpsichord) et al  
*DG 486 6979 etc (3x digital singles)*



Recent months have yielded both a new Waltz by Chopin and, of arguably greater historical significance, this previously unknown Serenade, now formally authenticated and listed as No. 648 in the updated Köchel catalogue of Mozart's complete works.

Such priceless finds are cause for celebration: this seven-movement Serenade is not simply trifling juvenilia, but rather an accomplished essay in one of the most fashionable musical genres of the late 1760s. Unsurprisingly dubbed 'A Very Little Night-Music', it survived in a copy made around 1780, long-since forgotten, but lately exhumed from the Carl Becker Collection of the Municipal Library of Leipzig, and validated by Dr Ulrich Leisinger and his team from the Salzburg Mozarteum, where it was heard for the first time in 2024.

DG have taken the unusual step of releasing three separate recordings of this work, heard in differing performing versions. While this might be seen as an ideal opportunity to showcase some of the Yellow label's emerging talent (most of the players are around Mozart's age at the time he is thought to have written this Serenade), both chamber versions sound surprisingly alike, only deviating substantially over questions of tempo. There is, frankly, very little to choose between the two, with Baumgartner, Pochebut, Dose and Jockel perhaps having the edge over their rivals (Shinoyama, Klinar, Comploi and Birsak) in their vivacious account.

Meanwhile, the reduced string section of the Gewandhausorchester under Herbert Blomstedt play with alluring tonal refinement and impeccable ensemble, too, and it is their more immediately accessible version which probably stands to gain most converts to this delectable 'new' Mozart work. *Michael Jameson*

**PERFORMANCES** ★★★★★  
**RECORDINGS** ★★★★★

Fabulous in Phibbs: Piatti Quartet have a close relationship with the British composer



## Joseph Phibbs

### String Quartets Nos 2-4

Piatti Quartet  
*Nimbus NI 6452 55:57 mins*



Joseph Phibbs was 40 when he composed his first numbered string quartet, in 2014. Some ten years on, he has recently produced his fourth – for the commissioners of that roundly welcomed work, the Piatti Quartet, who here render all three subsequent quartets with wonderfully subtle perceptiveness.

Already creatively surefooted – and steeped in strings since a young cellist – Phibbs has only grown in stature over the past decade. And the same is true of the prize-winning Piatti, for whom Phibbs has become their most-performed contemporary composer. The rich, mutual understanding they share readily communicates to the listener.

Each work has its own transparency of form and texture which shows an unabashed debt to Britten among other forebears. Yet it's completely Phibbs's voice that emerges through his wholly coherent and idiosyncratic – often understated, deceptively simple – use of quasi-tonal and rhythmic devices, with supple flickers of blues, Balkan folk and more.

It's only on arrival at the upwards-yearning final movement

of String Quartet No. 2 (2015) that the ingenuity of its structural and expressive arc becomes clear, as the preceding sections – complete in themselves – lead to a radiantly reflective close.

String Quartet No. 3 (2018, revised 2021) is dedicated to former teacher Steven Stucky (1949-2016) and its restrained yet propulsive first movement is the most substantial. But the ensuing four prove equally variegated, and more affecting still, even where quirkiest in the harmonically uncanny fourth, 'Corrente'.

The use of cello as melodic as well as harmonic underpinning is nowhere more striking than in Quartet No. 4 (2024). Described as 'a sequence of short character pieces', oscillating motifs and folk rhythms combine with an English whimsy unafraid of its passionate emotional core. *Steph Power*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## Rihm

### Fremde Szenen

Irvine Arditti (violin), Gianluca Pirisi (cello), Roberta Pandolfi (piano)  
*Odradek ODRCD456 54:20 mins*



When Wolfgang Rihm died last July, he left over 500 works, and, although they often display an acerbic edge, he was keen for them to relate to the past, saying: 'Music

must be full of emotion, but emotion must be full of complexity'. *Fremde Szenen* (Strange Scenes) are subtitled 'attempts at a piano trio', and reflect the composer's love of the music of Robert Schumann. That doesn't mean that they bathe in a Romantic aura: the first of the Scenes may occasionally land on a consonance, but it's mostly propelled through a barely tonal path with fractured rhythms and fierce attacks.

The second Scene is often more sustained in the strings, and Romantic gestures are easier to find, although they're never used in a conventionally functional manner. Rhythms sometimes have a sense of regularity, with motoric figures and pounding, repeated piano chords underlying the melodic string writing, but there's little feeling of repose: this keeps you on the edge of your seat for over 20 minutes.

Quiet, discrete gestures usher in the third Scene, with the odd violent irruption, but the Romantic feel is much more sustained here, despite distortions, and it rises to an almost conventional climax, before a rapid final disintegration. It's hard to imagine a more involved set of performances, and the same goes for *Antlitz*, for violin and piano, where Arditti produces an amazing range of tone, mostly at a restrained dynamic, and the progress of the music has the same inevitability as late Morton Feldman. *Martin Cotton*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★