



mentioned nucleus of Bartók's Fifth Quartet. On the other side, Antokoletz sheds light on the magnificent integration realised in the Fourth Quartet (1928) between the "abstract symmetrical principles of pitch organization" and the so-called Romanian *hora lungă* (literally, "long song"), a musical style discovered by Bartók in the region of Maramureş on the northeastern Carpathians.

The crucial question of the performance is addressed in Judit Frigyesi's fascinating chapter entitled "How Barbaric Is Bartók's *Forste*?" (pp. 200–242). Through studying musical dynamics alone, Frigyesi is able to disentangle the stratification of commonly held beliefs supporting the Bartók myth. "There exist two determining views with regard to Bartók's music: first, it is dissonant, even brutal, aggressive, and ugly – but for the right emotional and moral reasons. And second, it is based on a perfect system. Ultimately both views feed the same conception: Bartók is infallible and uncompromising in every aspect of life and art" (p. 202). In other words, to demonstrate that Bartók's *forte* is not so straightforwardly percussive, hammering and barbaric means to unveil the ideological and political values nestled in Bartók's legacy and, more importantly, to touch upon the historiographical constructions of the last century, when "dissonance and ugliness had been elevated to the rank of a moral stance" (p. 201).

The political legacy of Bartók's quartets rises to prominence in the essays of Martin Iddon (pp. 243–260) and Biró (pp. 261–284), who analyse selected chamber works by two of Bartók's outstanding heirs, namely Ligeti and Kurtág. Biró and Iddon also contribute the co-authored "Epilogue: Bartók's Present" (pp. 306–315), in which they track the "spectres" of Bartók into the musical

present. After a long search, they discover the legacy of Bartók in the fundamental synthesis of different musical cultures, since "Bartók's concern was really with a music (or musics) that, while celebrating dialectical opposites, opposed actual conflict" (p. 315).

Surely Bartók's quartets are haunting our world because they evoke the troubling presence of the 'Other' in the core of our cultural paradigms. Even if timbre is not so frequently evoked in the volume (attesting more of a defect in our aged analytical approaches than any shortcoming on the part of the editors), this is maybe the most parlous heritage of Bartók's spirit. As Mila observed more than fifty years ago, "in his quartets Bartók forces himself assiduously to cross the noise threshold, which is the acoustic presence of Nature, a key to unveil its secret. [It is] this anxiety to open all the doors that, in the only opera of the composer, leads Judith to her self-destruction."

Nicolò Palazzetti



### William Blank: *Einklang*

*Quatuor Sine Nomine, Barbara Zanichelli*  
*Genuin classics GEN 16422*

Triptyque formé de trois « quatuors mouvements » (*Satz, Traces* et *Trakl Lied*) pouvant être joués indépendamment les uns des autres, *Einklang* explore la dimension picturale et poétique de l'écriture pour quatuor à cordes et voix. L'utilisation de quarts de tons combinés à des effets de glissandi donne au premier mouvement une fluctuation du grain sonore qui joue sur des variations d'intensité et de matière. Les circulations de flux dialoguent avec des modes de jeux, échos d'une tragédie très bartokienne de volume et de couleur. Le recours à une polyrythmie proliférant en démultiplication d'effets disparates finit par créer une tension acérée du discours sans saturer l'écoute pour autant. D'une construction plus espacée et aérienne, *Traces* laisse entendre un jeu plus homophonique. Travaillant une surface sonore élargie, le quatuor navigue à vue sur des textures qui semblent plus resserrées au fur et à mesure qu'on progresse vers le terme du mouvement. Impossible de ne pas penser au dernier mouvement de l'opus 10 de Schoenberg (et dans une moindre mesure au dernier verset du *Pierrot lunaire*) lorsque la ligne aiguë stratosphérique de la soprano Barbara Zanichelli fait irruption dans le dernier mouvement (*Trakl Lied*). Point de fuite autant que conclusion, le poème de Georg Trakl fait ici l'objet d'une transposition quasi figuraliste. On admire chez les interprètes du Quatuor Sine Nomine cette approche déneuvée, presque blanche et flottante qui donne aux vers une très forte dimension emblématique. La brûlure du désir contredit l'épaisseur du charnel dans une forme ambiguë de dramaturgie et d'onirisme – du très grand art.

David Verdier