

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PACM 108

Heifetz - Piatigorsky

Brahms - Franck - Mozart - Mendelssohn

Pristine
XR

"The prospect of great virtuosi playing chamber music together, either for relaxation or for gainful employment, is by no means new; but the Kreisler-Rachmaninov duo never expanded to include piano quartets and quintets, nor did the Thibaud-Casals-Cortot Trio. Both these ensembles gave a great deal of pleasure, but they were somewhat inflexible. The advantage of the Pilgrimage Concerts is that every single item chosen for recording differs in scoring from its fellows; the octet and sextet are for strings alone, and the three quintets are for different combinations of instruments: Franck's is for piano and string quartet, Mozart's is for two violins, two violas, and 'cello. Heifetz and Piatigorsky, the ultra-violet and infra-red of this brilliant musical spectrum, have gathered around them a magnificent group of players some of whose names are already well known to connoisseurs. Neither William Primrose nor Leonard Pennario need introduction, but a brief word about the remaining five may not be out of place.

Israel Baker, a native of Chicago, played under Toscanini in the NBC Symphony and now leads the Paramount Studio orchestra besides leading an active life as soloist and conductor. He has played chamber music informally with Heifetz, Primrose and Piatigorsky for the last five or six years, and carries out his difficult task in this album with great distinction. Arnold Belnick is a New Yorker who has taught violin and chamber music at the Peabody Conservatory of Music at Baltimore, and now lives in Los Angeles. Joseph Stepansky (who, like Belnick, appears only in the Octet) is a former member of the Fine Arts Quartet and the Hollywood String Quartet. Playing second viola to Primrose is Virginia Majewski, a graduate of the Eastman School and Curtis Institute, now principal viola in the MGM Studio Orchestra. Gabor Rejto, Hungarian-born 'cellist, was a member of the Lener and Gordon String Quartets before settling in Southern California, at whose University he heads the string department.

Playing through these discs is an awe-inspiring experience. After years of making do with ensembles with a weak member here or there, waiting for exposed passages in octaves that never sound quite in tune, it is sheer relief to listen to and enjoy performances that are technically as perfect as possible, musically as sincere as one could wish for. Inevitably, the tonal personalities of Heifetz and Piatigorsky dominate the scene, but anyone who thinks the other players are passengers should try the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's Octet, surely one of the trickiest pieces of music to synchronise and balance in the entire chamber music repertory. But the entire work is a joy to hear from the first notes to the last. Mendelssohn wrote it with his violin teacher Eduard Rietz in mind, and the concerto-like first violin part in Heifetz's hands loses no time in getting into orbit. For sheer breath-taking brilliance, utter ease and naturalness of phrasing, and magical control of timbre, this performance is unique and unrivalled. I guarantee that when you have played it once, you will not believe your ears and will want to start right again at the beginning - that is, if you can resist the Mozart on the other side..."

Excerpts from review in The Gramophone by D.S., November 1962 - reproduced in full online

I can add little to the above review except to say that I'm sure the reviewer would appreciate the quite remarkable improvements in sound quality that have been possible with these XR remasters, lifting a distinct sonic veil from these near-60-year-old recordings and holding them up to a fabulous new light.

Andrew Rose

heifetz piatigorsky

the chamber concerts

PACM 108

franck piano quintet
mozart string quintet
brahms string sextet
mendelssohn octet



Pristine
XR

studio recordings, 1961

heifetz - piatigorsky

the chamber concerts

disc one

MOZART String Quintet No. 4 in G minor, K.516

- 1st mvt. - Allegro (9:04)
- 2nd mvt. - Menuetto and Trio. Allegretto (4:29)
- 3rd mvt. - Adagio ma non troppo (8:20)
- 4th mvt. - Adagio - Allegro (8:39)

Jascha Heifetz - Israel Baker violins

William Primrose - Virginia Majewski violas

Gregor Piatigorsky cello

Recorded 29/30 August 1961

FRANCK Piano Quintet in F minor

5. 1st mvt. - Molto moderato quasi lento (14:23)
6. 2nd mvt. - Lento, con molto sentimento (8:11)
7. 3rd mvt. - Allegro non troppo, ma con fuoco (8:15)

Leonard Pennario piano

Jascha Heifetz - Israel Baker violins

William Primrose viola

Gregor Piatigorsky cello

Recorded 21/22 August 1961

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Jascha Heifetz and Gregor Piatigorsky

Recorded at RCA Studios, Hollywood, USA

Total duration: 1hr 59:05

CD1: 61:23 CD2: 57:42

disc two

BRAHMS String Sextet No. 2 in G major, Op. 36

1. 1st mvt. - Allegro non troppo (8:39)
2. 2nd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro non troppo - Presto giocoso (6:36)
3. 3rd mvt. - Poco Adagio (7:03)
4. 4th mvt. - Poco Allegro (7:17)

Jascha Heifetz - Israel Baker violins

William Primrose - Virginia Majewski violas

Gregor Piatigorsky - Gabor Rejto cellos

Recorded 28/29 August 1961

MENDELSSOHN String Octet in E flat major, Op. 20

5. 1st mvt. - Allegro moderato con fuoco (12:46)
6. 2nd mvt. - Andante (5:35)
7. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro leggierissimo (4:19)
8. 4th mvt. - Presto (5:26)

Jascha Heifetz - Israel Baker violins

Arnold Belnick - Joseph Stepansky violins

William Primrose - Virginia Majewski violas

Gregor Piatigorsky - Gabor Rejto cellos

Recorded 24/25 August 1961