

★ BLOCH. Quintet for piano and strings. Quintetto Chigiano

The Quintet, written in 1923, is apparently one of Bloch's favourite creations. And well might it be, for it is a work of great beauty and profundity, teeming with imaginative invention and original instrumental effects, and technically a masterpiece of organic development from two or three thematic cells which are first heard at the beginning and which run through the entire quintet. There are people who maintain that Bloch is an acquired taste, and who idly repeat the shallow remark that his music is all wailing and gnashing of teeth: may I recommend them to listen to the lyrical fervour of the mystical slow movement of this work, or the exultant fantasy of the finale?

The previous recording by the Pro Arte and Casella was deleted some years ago, but that is not the only reason for welcoming this new issue. For this is a performance such as one dreams of—ensemble playing of the utmost perfection completely at the service of the music, following faithfully every subtlety indicated or implied by the composer; technically flawless, despite the enormous difficulties of intonation, rhythm, balance and ensemble; warmed by the sympathetic musicianship of this remarkable team; and excellently recorded. Masterly. This disc has come in time to be reckoned, in my estimation, *The Chamber Recording* of 1951.

L.S., *The Gramophone*, December 1951

★ SHOSTAKOVITCH. Piano Quintet, Op.57. Quintetto Chigiano

The LP repertory is not afraid of including major chamber works—even unusual ones—and it here has taken in one of the most satisfactory of modern piano quintets. The medium has no great vogue nowadays, possibly because of the unfortunate tendency of the nineteenth century to write for it in such a way as to make it sound like a badly scored - for small orchestra; but Shostakovich avoids the trap completely. The outstanding feature of the Quintet, technically, is the variety of resource of physical sound the composer draws from his players, while never asking more of any individual instrument than it can reasonably and effectively produce. There are extended passages for piano alone; for the string quartet alone; for one stringed instrument and the piano; for violin and *pizzicato* 'cello alone; and constantly the piano is used in registers which *add* to the string music—not merely reduplicate it.

This emphasis on the technical virtues of the music is not intended to be faint praise indicating its lack of serious content; that it has, too. Written in 1940, between the Sixth and Seventh (*Leningrad*) Symphonies, it covers much the same emotional ground as the orchestral works, while having no powerful *allegro* movement. It has, too, the symphonies' expanse; the first two movements form virtually an extended prelude and fugue, followed by a scherzo, a large *adagio*, and an *allegretto* finale that at the end becomes positively skittish.

Performance and recording are both of the highest calibre. It is possible to get the strings sounding right without taking too much brilliance off the piano, and only once, at the climax of the slow movement, is there a feeling that not quite all the Sienese players' intensity can be accommodated on the disc. The work once won a Stalin Prize of 100,000 roubles; but that should not dissuade readers from giving this highly successful recording of it full consideration for any personal prizes they may have to bestow.

M.M., *The Gramophone*, December 1952

Both of these exquisite recordings demonstrate not only the superb playing of the Quintetto Chigiano — whose recordings of Boccherini, Brahms and Franck quintets have long been available at Pristine — but also the expertise of Decca's recording engineers at the dawning of the tape-and-LP era of high fidelity professional *and* consumer audio. Nevertheless they are now 72 years old, and are showing their age - at least, they were, prior to these Ambient Stereo XR remasters, which serve very well in placing the listener back into the Decca studios of West Hampstead, all those years ago.

Andrew Rose



# quintetto chigiano

## bloch & shostakovich

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BLOCH - SHOSTAKOVICH - PIANO QUINTETS  
QUINTETTO CHIGIANO

PACM 121  
PRISTINE  
AUDIO

### BLOCH Piano Quintet No. 1

1. 1st mvt. - Agitato (7:38)
2. 2nd mvt. - Andante mistico (11:27)
3. 3rd mvt. - Allegro energico (13:28)

Recorded 27-29 March, 1951

### SHOSTAKOVICH Piano Quintet in G minor, Op.57

4. 1st mvt. - Prelude: Lento (4:23)
5. 2nd mvt. - Fugue: Adagio (9:18)
6. 3rd mvt. - Scherzo: Allegretto (3:35)
7. 4th mvt. - Intermezzo: Lento (7:20)
8. 5th mvt. - Finale: Allegretto (7:02)

Recorded 22 & 24 October, 1951

### Quintetto Chigiano

Riccardo Brengola & Mario Benvenuti - violins  
Giovanni Leone - viola  
Lino Filippini - cello  
Sergio Lorenzi - piano

XR Remastered by Andrew Rose

Front cover artwork based on a photograph of Riccardo Brengola

Recorded at Decca's West Hampstead Studios, London

Total duration: **64:11**

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