

Fine Arts Quartet

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Classical: New Releases: Schumann: String Quartets Nos 1-3

Review by Stephen Pettitt

Listening to the Fine Arts Quartet in the opening movement of the first of Schumann's three fine Op 41 string quartets, all composed in that annus mirabilis of chamber music, 1842, it is impossible not to notice a certain ripeness in both their sound and approach, a ripeness that betrays the vintage of this American group, formed just after the second world war. If some of their mannerisms seem old-fashioned, the voice of experience tells. They are always wise to this inventive music's ever-changing spirit, drawing the full emotional effect from the luscious expressivity of the slow movement of No 3, yet rejoicing equally in the blatant mischief of the catchy ritornello that punctuates that work's exultant finale.