

chamber music

BEETHOVEN - STRING QUARTETS BELLA MUSICA THOROFON CTH2614



The string quartet form was first used in the later part of the eighteenth century. Joseph Haydn's first string quartets had five movements but he soon adopted the standard four movements form: a fast movement, a slow movement, a minuet and trio and a fast finale. Haydn, often called 'the father of the string quartet', sometimes played his quartets in an impromptu ensemble that included Mozart, who went on to write 26 string quartets of his own. Mozart never quite reached Haydn's achievement in this difficult musical genre but Ludwig van Beethoven composed brilliantly in the form throughout his career, publishing his first set (op. 18) in the year 1801 and eventually writing eighteen in all. This splendid eight-CD box set features the all Beethoven's String Quartets performed by the outstanding Philharmonia Quartet Berlin, founded in 1985 and long established world-wide as an ensemble famous for its homogenous sound and flawless interplay. Beethoven's 'late quartets' in particular brought the string quartet to a sublime level that has never been surpassed. By the time he wrote them he was almost totally deaf, which makes these works profoundly personal and gives the music great intensity. They often take the listener by surprise as they explore strangely rarefied harmonies, moving from prayer-like tranquillity to profanity, from sweet melody to forthright debate. These complex, humane and spiritual masterpieces are performed here by Philharmonia Quartet Berlin with fine musicianship, clarity and spiritual depth. All four musicians are members of the acclaimed Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and the quartet has won the Deutscher Schallplattenpreis (German disk award) twice as well as the coveted Echo Klassik Prize three times.

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