

GRAMOPHONE

ISOUNDS OF AMERICA

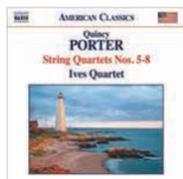
A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Q Porter

String Quartets – No 5; No 6; No 7; No 8

Ives Quartet

Naxos American Classics © 8 559781 (66' • DDD)



Quincy Porter (1897-1966) composed a healthy number of works while serving on

the faculty of major American institutions, among them nine string quartets spanning the years 1922 to 1958. As can be heard on this winning disc of Nos 5-8, Porter was a first-rate craftsman who knew the genre intimately (he was a skilled violinist) and how to create cogent instrumental dramas. All of the quartets are relatively short, the longest (No 6) running just over 18 minutes. Each piece contains volumes of content – arresting thematic material, vigorous rhythmic ideas – within its brief span while never sounding short-winded. The style could be called neo-classical; Porter's teachers included Ernest Bloch and Vincent d'Indy. The harmonic language is largely tonal, with the occasional presence of pungency as lines layer and criss-cross.

The music leans toward seriousness and brooding lyricism, the latter most affectingly present in the many beautiful slow movements (*Adagio* is a favourite Porter marking). A welcome hint of folk arrives in the finale of No 6. Whatever Porter writes, the unfolding of musical events engages the ear and often speaks in a warm voice. The Ives Quartet live up to their iconoclastic namesake by championing neglected repertoire. The musicians play Porter's quartets with potent attack, flexibility and poetic ardour, giving full life to the varied moods and intricate gestures. Now that the Ives have recorded the first eight quartets (Nos 1-4 were released in 2007 on Naxos), it may be time to squeeze No 9 in on another disc. **Donald Rosenberg**

'American Intersections'

Adams Hallelujah Junction Barber Souvenirs, Op 28 (arr Gold/Fizdale) Bolcom Recuerdos Copland El Salón México (arr Bernstein)

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GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Berta Rojas

The Paraguayan guitarist on her passion for tango and recording her new album in Buenos Aires

Tango's a big passion for you...

Argentina is a regular destination for Paraguayans. A great way to experience the Americas is through the music. I wanted to reflect that in my albums, starting with tango.

Tell me about the arrangements.

Tango's passion and sensuality are a natural fit for the guitar, although this is the first time it has been performed and recorded in this format. I wanted the guitar to *sing*, to show its richness of tone and flexibility. I asked the great arranger and multiple Grammy winner Carlos Franzetti, who lives in New York, to keep this in mind when writing for us. The programme's centerpiece is *Histoire du Tango* by Astor Piazzolla, originally written for flute and guitar.

Recording in Argentina helped?

I had the privilege of working with the conductor Popi Spatocco and one of the greatest chamber orchestras in South



America, the Camerata Bariloche; one could only grow as a musician playing with them.

And in the ION studios Piazzolla used?

One could feel there was something different about that studio. I hope we managed to capture some of the magic infused by so many great artists who recorded there.

What comes next?

This CD is the departure point for a series of albums I'm planning that will travel the varied musical landscapes of Latin America. Each country has music that is as different as our accents.

Rzewski Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues

Nina Schumann, Luis Magalhães *pfs*

TwoPianists © TP1039220 (63' • DDD)



The South African-based duo pianists Nina Schumann and Luis Magalhães looked

across the ocean to find inspiration for their captivating new disc, 'American Intersections'. The repertoire encompasses a range of styles, which these musicians seize by the throat and heart to give richly detailed, dynamic performances. In at least one case, the artistry prompts a new consideration of the music at hand(s). As

Schumann and Magalhães play Copland's *El Salón México* in the two-piano arrangement by Leonard Bernstein, you almost think you're hearing something you've never encountered. The reading is breathtakingly fast, with fierce definition of rhythms and dynamics, as if the music hall for which the piece is named had caught fire. The pianists bring similar intensity to Frederic Rzewski's *Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues* in the composer's two-piano version. The music almost hides the original tune within violent dissonances and clusters. The result is unsettling and galvanic. William Bolcom's *Recuerdos* are charismatic in a different way, taking Latin American dances – dedicated to musicians who excelled in the genre – and applying myriad colourful touches.

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