Dmitri Shostakovich: The Complete String Quartets

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Best Recordings of 2011

I have written about the Mandelring's Shostakovich recordings before (2008, "Shostakovich with the Mandelring Quartet", "First Impressions and Shostakovich" 2010, ("Notes from the 2011 Salzburg Festival (18)" 2011) – and always with calm enthusiasm… not unlike the playing of the German quartet in these interpretations. It goes something like this:

"The sheer beauty of all of Shostakovich's brilliantly harrowing ugliness that these discs offer […] is something to behold… The Mandelring Quartett offers more beauty and less gore in Shostakovich than one would expect if the only reference were the performances of the (all-Russian) "Borodin", "Beethoven", or "Shostakovich" Quartets. They accentuate surfaces more than spikes and corners; their rhythmic beat is propulsive but rarely maniacal. They are DSCH-seducers, not DSCH-enforcers… which is not to say that they can't work up an awesome storm. One must merely first get out of 'Borodin-mode' to listen to the Mandelring Quartett and gain the maximum reward from their sessions with Dmitry."

In short: there's much awesomeness to be had here, and in state-of-the-art sound at that.

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