



The RIAS Amadeus Quartet Recordings - Modernism

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Celebrated for their performances of the Viennese Classics, the Amadeus Quartet dominated the British chamber music scene for over 40 years and was one of the most respected ensembles of the twentieth century. The Quartet championed the music of their contemporaries, and for the radio they recorded string quartets written by the major English composers of their time, Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett. The Hungarian composer Mátyás Seiber introduced the Amadeus Quartet to the works of his fellow countryman Béla Bartók. By recording Henry Purcell's string fantasias, they followed references between Britten and the cradle of English chamber music. For volume IV in the RIAS Amadeus Quartet Recordings series the ensemble plays twentieth century Hungarian and English works. The Baroque composer Henry Purcell is also represented - as a reference point for Benjamin Britten's Second String Quartet. This edition substantially broadens the view of the Amadeus Quartet and demonstrates the inquisitiveness and assuredness with which Norbert Brainin and his three colleagues explored the music of their contemporaries. Under the direction of Michael Tippett, a group of young composers, including Mátyás Seiber and Peter Racine Fricker, wrote new string quartets for the Amadeus Quartet. Apart from Michael Tippett, it was first and foremost Benjamin Britten who, around 1950, established his reputation as Britain's most renowned composer. His Second String Quartet was conceived as a reminiscence of Henry Purcell, a progenitor of English music, for the 250th anniversary of his death. Two of Purcell's string fantasias and a chaconne, on which Britten had based his work, have therefore been included in this edition, and are released for the first time in the Amadeus Quartet's interpretation. The Hungarian composer Mátyás Seiber - who, like the members of the Amadeus Quartet, had to emigrate to Britain after the Nazis had seized power in Germany - wrote his Quartetto lirico in the spirit of the Viennese School, particularly that of Alban Berg. He also championed the string quartets of Béla Bartók, whose Fourth and Sixth Quartets are also available for the first time as performances by the Amadeus Quartet. Audite's excellent series of RIAS Amadeus Quartet Recordings is scheduled to include six volumes, exclusively presenting performances released for the first time on CD. As always, the ensemble's performances on this two-disc set of recordings from 1950-1956 demonstrate superb musicianship as well as the Amadeus Quartet's customary warmth and exuberance.