



Camille Saint-Saëns: Piano Quintet & String Quartet No. 1

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[American Record Guide](#) (Donald R Vroon - 2017.01.01)

The Piano Quintet has not been recorded often; the same composer's Piano Quartet has been recorded more. I have three recordings of the quintet, and I have grown to like it a lot. The Hyperion recording is British—Nash Ensemble—and dominated by the piano (Sept/Oct 2005). It is very straightforward but still quite pleasant. The Naxos (Sept/Oct 2013, coupled with the Piano Quartet) has excellent piano work from Cristina Ortiz and very sweet, sensitive playing by the Fine Arts Quartet (American). This one is more passionate than the others, and the pianist may be the best of the three. It is never rushed, but it comes across the way Italian males tend to do: eager and arduous but not especially tender. I like it! But I will need to keep the Naxos for the beautiful contrast. Certainly this recording deepened my respect for the music: there's more here than I realized.

The string quartet (No. 1 in E minor) also seems to be a better piece than I had thought—probably again it's the Italian passion and the German engineering. It still has some boring moments; Saint-Saens often wrote almost automatically.

This is a beautiful recording.