

VOCES LATINAS & • Dalí Qrt • CENTAUR 3023 (63:43)

EFRAIN AMAYA *Angelica*. **GINASTERA** String Quartet No. 1, op. 20. **SONIA MORALES-MATOS** *Divertimento Caribeño* No. 3. **PIAZZOLLA** *Four, for Tango. Tango Ballet*. **JUAN BAUTISTA PLAZA** *Fuga Criolla* & **GERARDO MATOS RODRIGUEZ** *La Cumparsita* (arr. Javier Monteil)

The Dalí Quartet is made up of Ari Isaacman-Beck, Carlos Rubio, Adriana Linares, and Jesús Morales. Alberto Ginastera's 1948 String Quartet, twice the length of anything else here, is the centerpiece of this all-Latin concert.

Efrain Amaya's *Angelica* is filled with Latin-American versions of Leonard Bernstein syncopations—L. B. in Caracas, as it were. A charming fugal section follows, then a lyrical interlude. It closes with a wild Latin American hoedown. Its six minutes tell the story of lovers in the age of Charlemagne who are bewitched by Merlin's fountains. It's a delight!

Juan Bautista Plaza's *Fuga Criolla* is a more formal fugue, looking back to Bach but with a Latin-American flavor, *à la* Villa-Lobos. The Dalí plays each piece appropriately: a happy rough-and-tumble bustle for *Amaya* and a silken elegance for *Plaza*.

Sonia Morales-Matos's *Divertimento Caribeño*, the newest piece (2019) here, is less certain of its origins and a bit sprawling, but more adventurous—even though its single movement follows the normal fast-slow-fast pattern.

Astor Piazzolla's two works, one early (1956), one late (1989), are his only ones written for string quartet. *Four, for Tango*, the late one, bristles with energy; it's not really a danceable Tango. *Tango Ballet* is more serious, with a long, slow, lyrical central section.

In a *Fanfare* 21:2 review of an Elan CD of all three Ginastera string quartets, Robert Carl wrote: "The Cuarteto Latinoamericano ... seems to own this music. It plays with enormous precision and passion. I can't imagine better interpretations." Other reviewers, including myself, have been equally impressed by the Latinoamericano. Written in 1948, at the cusp between Ginastera's first period of "Objective Nationalism" and his second, "Subjective Nationalism," the First Quartet has often been related to Bartók, but in this less ferocious (than the Latinoamericano) performance, its Latin-American roots come more to the fore. The Dalí need not fear reference to its more famous peer, as it plays with its own unique freshness. The Ginastera is fine, and the "fillers" earn recommendation by themselves.

The Dalí's first violinist, Ari Isaacman-Beck, writes detailed, astoundingly perceptive analyses of each piece; one can hear—or, more properly feel—the music just by reading his prose. The bonus track, Gerardo Matos Rodriguez's *La Cumparsita*, which Isaacman-Beck calls "perhaps the most famous tango ever written," has been transcribed into an elegant string quartet encore by Javier Montiel, violist of Cuarteto Latinoamericano.

Connections to Latin-American styles and rhythms have always enlivened classical music, serving as welcome seasoning. This lovely disc is a perfect example. **James H. North**

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