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of the Menuetto with tongues very much in cheek.

It helps that the quartet play with such a clear, slimline sound; their crispness, set against Génisson's sweet tone and (in the two finales, especially) almost balletic suppleness, gives the Weber, in particular, a delicious piquancy. Génisson doesn't make a single harsh or strident sound throughout. Regrettably, the Mozart feels noticeably more cautious: this is an elegant, unmannered account that doesn't milk the emotion – making the ensemble's more extrovert moments (such as their aggressive *forte-pianos* in the first Trio) feel slightly misplaced, rather than a foretaste of the character and imagination they bring to the Weber. **Richard Bratby**

## Mozart • Haydn

**Haydn** Divertimentos, HobXIV – No 4; No 7; No 8; No 9 **Mozart** Three Keyboard Concertos after JC Bach, K107

**Ensemble Castor**

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88985 43264-2 (66' • DDD)



The three concertos designated K107 are in fact arrangements of sonatas (Op 5

Nos 2-4) by JC Bach, whom Mozart had met in London in 1764 and who was to exert an important influence on the child composer's style. It seems that they were arranged early the following decade (Bach's sonatas had been published in London in about 1765) to cater to the need for concertos for the Mozart children's concert tours. They're perfectly decent little things, entertaining in the *galant* style without feeling the need to say any more than can be gleaned from their glittering surfaces. Apparently Mozart wrote out the orchestral outlines, including any newly created *tutti* material, and his father squeezed the clavier part in on the empty staves. So they're almost three-way collaborations.

Erich Traxler's piano is a 1795 model by Joseph Dohnal and matches well the attack of the string trio (whose instruments are not identified in the CD booklet), even if the keyboard is a little subdued in the mix. And while there's naturally nothing of the depth of the mature piano concertos here, these players never fail to find something to say. An example is the minuet finale of the D major Concerto (No 1), whose Trio section features plucked strings against a keyboard part with the sustain pedal held down, creating a beguiling halo of sound

and a welcome contrast to the Alberti bass that prevails in so much of this music.

Haydn's divertimentos come from his earlier years too, some written for his first employer, Count Morzin, and some during the 1760s for the Esterházy family. The piano takes the lead here, with the violins and cello supporting the right and left hands. The most virtuoso music is here too, not least in the almost Bachian toccata that closes No 4 in C.

There's no great revelation among this music but then it wasn't written for that purpose. It was conceived purely to entertain and that's exactly what it does. Lovely, imaginative performances on some sweet-sounding period instruments.

**David Thresher**

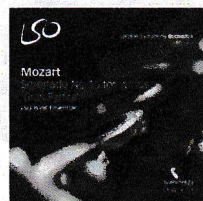
## Mozart

Serenade No 10, 'Gran Partita', K361

**LSO Wind Ensemble**

LSO Live (M) LSO5075 (48' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at LSO St Luke's, London, October 31, 2015



*Gramophone's* classification (12/08) of the LSO as the fourth-best orchestra

in the world always made me think of The Housemartins, who advertised themselves as the fourth-best band in Hull.

Nevertheless – and can it really be almost a decade since that exercise was undertaken? – it still means that when its players are on top form, you'll barely get a better orchestral night out in London.

The same goes for its wind soloists, of course, 12 of whom come together with double-bassist Colin Paris for Mozart's irresistible *Gran Partita*. It's a goodly noise, rumbustious in the dance movements, sleek in the intensely wrought sonata form of the first movement, caressing in the slow music and almost vandalous in the yobbish rondo-finale. There's the excitement of the live performance, too – and this really *is* live and in-your-face. There are all the noises of wind-playing, from intakes of breath to keywork, and not excluding the very sounds of transferring a column of air from one's lungs down the tube of an instrument. There are one or two moments when coordination goes awry but never for long; and three or four when a patch would have been required in studio conditions (there's one where the oboe's top B flat malfunctions at the outset of the great *Adagio's* recap).

Forty-eight minutes of fun, then, even if not the ultimate library choice. One other

thing occurred during listening. I learnt this music as a student from Collegium Aureum's proto-steampunk period-instrument version (DHM, long deleted), in which maximum contrast was made between perky clarinets and wheezy basset-horns. On modern instruments, the single reeds sound so similar (excepting the difference in range) that it's hard to tell where one ends and the other takes over.

**David Thresher**

## Raftery

String Quartet No 1<sup>a</sup>. First Companion<sup>b</sup>.

Pleasanties<sup>b</sup>. 'Friedhof' Quintet<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Heath Quartet; <sup>b</sup>Berkeley Ensemble;

<sup>c</sup>Animare Ensemble

Métier © MSV28569 (66' • DDD)



This is – I believe – the first commercial recording of music by Kevin Raftery (*b*1952),

an expatriate American composer (born in St Louis) who has lived and worked in London since 1989. A pupil of Fricker (at Berkeley) and Justin Connolly (who had studied with Fricker in London) at the Royal Academy of Music, Raftery is a practical musician, member of the New London Chamber Choir, jobbing bassoonist and director of the Richmond Concert Society.

His sombre, single-span First Quartet (2012; a Second was completed this year) is a memorial for a quartet-loving friend. Its concentrated single span seems both an expression of their lively discussions and a coming to terms with the loss. *First Companion* (also from 2012) is a quartet for clarinet, bassoon, violin and viola designed to accompany Schubert's Octet and the Septets of Beethoven and Stravinsky in concert programmes. Its lighter, garrulous discourse also alludes to *The Canterbury Tales*; a group sharing stories along a journey. *Pleasanties* (2011), by contrast, is a set of nine 'whimsical' miniatures for oboe doubling cor anglais, clarinet, bass clarinet and bassoon, many dedicated to past American composers. The *Friedhof* Quintet (2011; for flute, harp and string trio) is again a memorial, to Raftery's mother, who died in 2010.

This is a most worthwhile disc of fine, well-made chamber music by a composer largely unknown to the wider world. Métier has a tradition in this, as with its Jane Wells disc from 2000 (and still available – just!). Nicely clear, warm sound as usual from this label.

**Guy Rickards**