

The Cypress Quartet:
wondrous artistry

A young quartet
launch themselves into
late Beethoven with
keen assurance

Beethoven

String Quartets – No 14, Op 131; No 16, Op 135
Cypress Quartet (Cecily Ward, Tom Stone *vs*
Ethan Filner *vs* Jennifer Kloetzel *vs*)
Cypress Performing Arts Association
Ⓢ Ⓣ 666449 617324 (63' • DDD)

Beethoven's late string quartets challenge even the most seasoned ensembles to delve deeply into the expressive and structural elements that make these works such towering achievements. Can musicians who have been together only a dozen or so years truly succeed in illuminating the riches?

In the case of the Cypress Quartet, the answer is an unqualified "yes". The San Francisco-based ensemble's first volume of Beethoven quartets reveals artistry of uncommon insight and cohesion. The Cypress players are seamless conversationalists who take Beethoven at his word but aren't afraid to place keenly dramatic and subtle stamps on the music.

The repertoire couldn't be more demanding. The Cypress take up the vast panorama of Op 131 and the leaner complexities of Op 135 with equal assurance, penetration and nuance. Every tempo relates to one another and is deftly gauged. The lyrical aspects in each score are allowed to breathe, while the bold strokes –

especially in Op 131 – come leaping from the page as if Beethoven were in the studio badgering the players to make the most of his craggy, elegant, fierce and eloquent material.

Among the many fine moments is the slow movement of Op 135, which unfolds with the

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kind of natural grace and tenderness that caresses the music as the indelible utterance it should be. The intense and often surprising changes in mood, texture and rhythmic shape in Op 131 are the result of a unified approach in which sound and meaning are scrupulously considered.

What wondrous artistry to behold from violinists Cecily Ward and Tom Stone, viola-player Ethan Filner and cellist Jennifer Kloetzel. To say that Volume 2 in their series is greatly anticipated is a woeful understatement.

Donald Rosenberg