



Ludwig van Beethoven: Complete String Quartets

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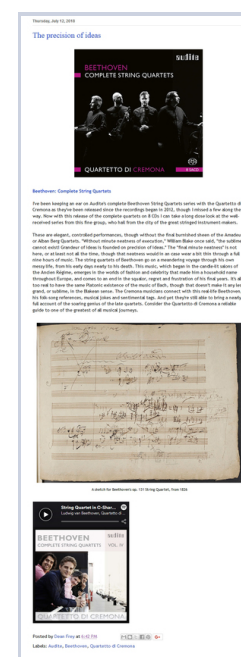
<http://several-instruments.blogspot.com> (Dean Frey - 2018.07.12)
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The precision of ideas

I've been keeping an ear on Audite's complete Beethoven String Quartets series with the Quartetto di Cremona as they've been released since the recordings began in 2012, though I missed a few along the way. Now with this release of the complete quartets on 8 CDs I can take a long close look at the well-received series from this fine group, who hail from the city of the great stringed instrument-makers.

These are elegant, controlled performances, though without the final burnished sheen of the Amadeus or Alban Berg Quartets. "Without minute neatness of execution," William Blake once said, "the sublime cannot exist! Grandeur of ideas is founded on precision of ideas." The "final minute neatness" is not here, or at least not all the time, though that neatness would in an case wear a bit thin through a full nine hours of music. The string quartets of Beethoven go on a meandering voyage through his own messy life, from his early days nearly to his death. This music, which began in the candle-lit salons of the Ancien Régime, emerges in the worlds of fashion and celebrity that made him a household name throughout Europe, and comes to an end in the squalor, regret and frustration of his final years. It's all too real to have the same Platonic existence of the music of Bach, though that doesn't make it any less grand, or sublime, in the Blakean sense. The Cremona musicians connect with this real-life Beethoven, his folk-song references, musical jokes and sentimental tags. And yet they're still able to bring a nearly full account of the soaring genius of the late quartets. Consider the Quartetto di Cremona a reliable guide to one of the greatest of all musical journeys.



Thursday, July 12, 2018

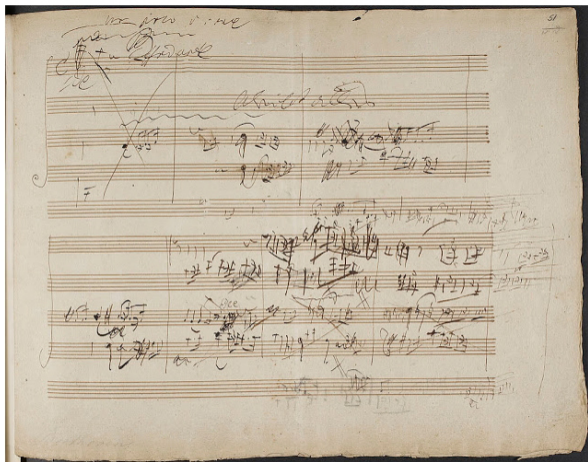
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Beethoven: Complete String Quartets

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A sketch for Beethoven's op. 131 String Quartet, from 1826



Posted by Dean Frey at 6:42 PM



Labels: Audite, Beethoven, Quartetto di Cremona