

 **Strad****August 2010**

Glass – String Quartet nos. 1-4
Carducci Quartet
Naxos 8.559636

By opening the disc with the Second Quartet, the Carducci has chosen to begin with the most readily accessible of Philip Glass's five quartet scores. Created by combining four short interludes from a 1983 staging of Samuel Beckett's prose-poem 'Company', it came at a time when Glass was fully immersed in his now familiar Minimalist style.

The Third followed two years later and used music from the film documenting the life of the Japanese author Yukio Mishima. It's strong and dramatic in content, and its weight and gravitas continue into the Fourth Quartet written in memory of the experimental artist Brian Buczak.

For the First Quartet, we go back to 1966 and a time when Glass was still searching for a musical identity that would discard serialism. If he wasn't quite successful in forging an individual voice, the two-movement score is still striking.

Bringing these works to life requires a multitude of nuances and spotless intonation, and the young British-based Carducci Quartet flawlessly meets the challenge. The intricate web of sound throughout is rhythmically precise and crystal clear, with minute changes of dynamics unfailingly achieved. The recording is generous in the lower reaches, adding to Emma Denton's richly toned cello.

David Denton