

Mp3 Alan Vivian, John Gould Quartet - Today -yesterday



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Modern "classical" music with strong melodies, jazz-influenced rhythms and harmonies. Neo-romantic

String Quartet paired with neo-classical Clarinet Quintet. Debts to Benny Goodman, Mozart and

Beethoven. 8 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Contemporary, EASY LISTENING: Mature Details:

"Today-Yesterday", comprising String Quartet No. 1 ("The Key") 26'00"; Clarinet Quintet No. 1 in D ("The Princess") 27'00. Australian composer Derek Strahan wrote these two chamber works in 1980/81 for release on a recording marking his decision to concentrate on composing concert music after a long period working as a composer/writer in the music and TV industries. The agenda became somewhat complicated by the intrusion of an complex love affair, which found its way into the musical content of these pieces! The String Quartet is the more intense of the two and combines passages depicting emotional conflict with lyrical passages depicting romantic fervour. The work is based on a musical cipher: La Octave Re Ninth A. The cipher is, musically, "The Key" to the work. It recurs constantly, but in a constantly changing form. Only the last note (A) is of constant pitch. The other notes (as befits sol-fa designation), change pitch according to what (musical) Key the work is in at the time. "The Key" is, thus, a variant on the "idée fixe" device invented by Berlioz for his "Symphonie Fantastique" - a musical motif representing the beloved, which keeps returning. Key is also the last name of the beloved, and "The Key" motif denotes her first name. The lady graciously permitted her photographic image to appear on the cover of the (then) LP, and now on the remastered CD (even though the love affair is now past history!). The work is in 4 movements, played continuously: 1. "FEVER" - "The Key" in settings of increasing rhythmic heat. 2. 'RHAPSODY' - Cyclic treatment of a rhapsodic theme. 3. LOVE-HOPE" - A double theme and variations of an intensely melodic character (the most "classical" sounding section of the work.) 4. 'DANCE" - Cyclic treatment of a syncopated dance tune, which progressively disintegrates,

leading to a Coda (conclusion) built on an unresolved conflict of (musical) Keys. The inspiration for writing the Clarinet Quintet came from the composer's shock discovery of his Beloved's extraordinary physical resemblance to a portrait of Princess Marie-Christiane Lichnowsky (1795-1841), wife of prince Karl Lichnowsky, the most loyal and constant patron of Ludwig van Beethoven. The Lichnowskys were also the first of Beethoven's Viennese patrons. He lived in their house for the first two years of his lifelong stay in Vienna. The Princess was "one of three beautiful girls who were known in Vienna as 'The Three Graces'. She was highly intelligent, and an accomplished musician. She had a detailed knowledge of the philosophies of the 18th century Enlightenment. Beethoven was introduced to the Lichnowskys by Count Waldstein (of the "Waldstein" Piano Sonata) who was a member of the Bonn chapter of the radical "Illuminati" society. Were the Lichnowskys also members of this and/or of the Freemasons? Much of Beethoven's music is informed by radical political philosophy. The Princess had a complex, paradoxical nature, and was capable of sustaining unresolved opposing characteristics in her personality. (On one occasion she contrived to have her husband summoned to a "house of pleasure" where she met him in disguise!) Beethoven's relationship with the Lichnowskys was of a deep and lasting nature, from 1793 through and beyond the turbulent years of Napoleon's occupation of Vienna. The Quintet has as its "program" the conjecture that there existed an attachment between the Princess and Beethoven which began in 1793 when Beethoven was 23, which had to be kept secret for reasons of social propriety, but which the Prince knew about and condoned. (It is known to music historians that the Lichnowsky marriage was not a "happy" one). It's unlikely that the Princess was the "Immortal Beloved" of the famous letter discovered at Beethoven's death; but Beethoven's attachment to her may have been the undisclosed, central relationship of his life (analogous to Brahms's relationship with Clara Schumann). It may have greatly contributed to the unresolved psychic turmoil which is at the heart of his music. The portrait of the Princess is also on the CD cover of "Today-Yesterday." Adopting this "program" gave Strahan the context he needed, after writing the String Quartet, to embark (paradoxically) on a much more light-hearted piece, evoking the supposed core of the conjectured relationship as described above. The "Today-Yesterday" theme is realised through the use of musical content of "Today" - writing music of tribute to 20th century clarinet masters, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Woody Herman - in a work of four movements in formal 18th/19th century Viennese structure. The Quintet has as its sub-title "A Study in Co-existing and Equal Opposites." 1. "PROFANE LOVE/ROMANTIC LOVE"- Written in strict Sonata

form. 2. "CONSTANCY/DECEIT" - Theme Variations 3. "FLIRTATION/ISOLATION" - Scherzo Trio 4. "FUSION OF OPPOSITES" - A Rondo, but at the third statement of the main theme, it is contrapuntally combined with a second theme, leading to a climactic finish.

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