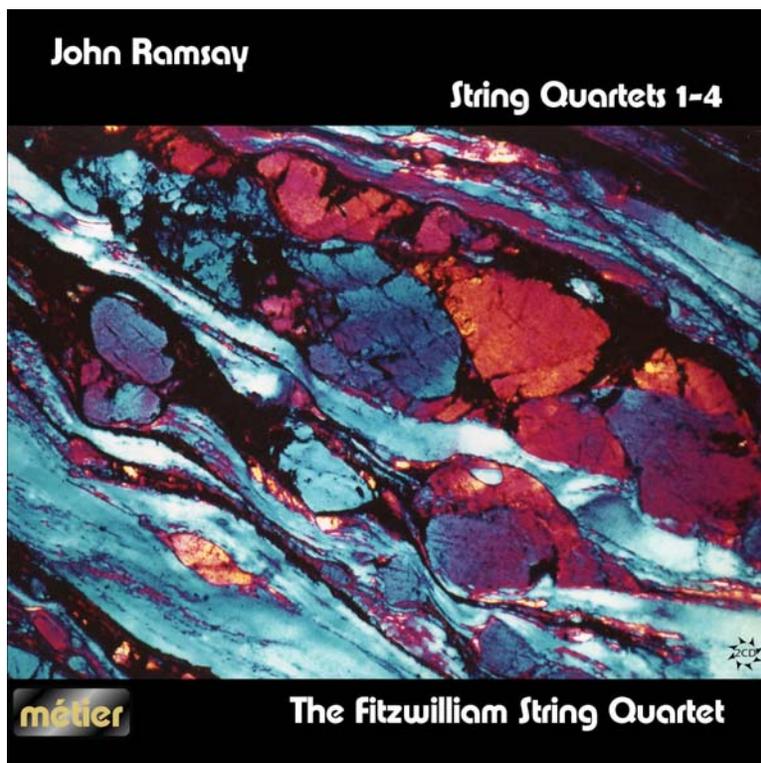




New Release - Press Information



ARTIST(S): The Fitzwilliam Quartet
COMPOSER(S): John Ramsay
TITLE: String Quartets 1-4
CATALOGUE NUMBER: MSV28528 [Bar Code 080973082824]
RELEASE DATE: 26th March 2012
PRICE POINT: CD2/Slimline Case/Special Price/UK Dealer £7.95

Track Listing:

CD1: String Quartet No. 1 in D minor; String Quartet No. 2 in E minor ("Shackleton")
CD2: String Quartet No. 3 in C major; String Quartet No 4 ("Charles Darwin")

Total Playing Time: 87.01

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Issued on behalf of Divine Art Records by
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Repertoire/Product Information:

John Ramsay is a Professor of Geology by profession but also a highly talented composer of chamber and orchestral works. These four quartets are excellent examples of post-modernist music, employing no artificial boundaries. They are extremely accessible and highly deserving of attention – beautifully played. A real discovery is in store for lovers of the string quartet idiom.

John Ramsay was born in London in 1931. He started playing the violoncello at the age of 18 with Timothy Toomey and also began lessons from him in basic harmony and counterpoint. His compulsory military service was carried out with two years in the orchestra of the band of the Corps of Royal Engineers where he became principal 'cellist and tenor drummer. During this period he studied violoncello with Professor Margit Hegedus. After military service he was appointed Professor at Imperial College, the University of Leeds and the University of Zürich. He was one of the principal organizers of the University of London Orchestra and was deputy leader of the 'cello section of the Fairfax Orchestra based in London. On retirement he joined a group of teachers to develop courses in chamber music at Cratoule, France. He has composed several works for chamber and orchestral groups mostly in tonal style with some using serial methods.

Artist Information:

The Fitzwilliam's friendship with Prof. Ramsay dates back to his daughter Alison's violin lessons with Jonathan Sparey, when the group was Quartet-in-Residence at the University of York. More recently, the Fitzwilliam were deeply honoured to be chosen to perform the newly commissioned Quartet No.4 at the Darwin Festival in Cambridge during the bi-centenary celebrations, and subsequently to include this on the current CD of the complete (to date) Ramsay Quartets, in celebration of the composer's 80th birthday.

Founded in 1968 by four Cambridge undergraduates, the Fitzwilliam first became well known through its close personal association with Dmitri Shostakovich, who befriended them following a visit to York to hear them play. He entrusted them with the Western premières of his last three quartets, and before long they had become the first ever group to perform and record all fifteen. These recordings, which gained many international awards, secured for them a worldwide concert schedule and a long-term contract with Decca which embraced some byways of late Romantic repertoire (including Franck, Delius, Borodin, and Sibelius) before they embarked on a Beethoven cycle. Indeed, the Shostakovich set was included in *Gramophone* magazine's "Hundred Greatest-ever Recordings" in November 2005.

This Ramsay quartet album is their second release on Divine Art, following a reissue of an earlier disc of Haydn quartets originally made for Dunelm Records (DDV24151).



The Fitzwilliam was Quartet-in-Residence at the University of York for twelve years and at the University of Warwick for three, as well as Affiliate Artists at Bucknell University (USA), since 1978. In 1998 they began a new Residency at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, with similar associations at Bangor (Wales) and London Royal Holloway following soon after – and St Andrews (Scotland) in 2011.

They are one of the few string quartets in the world using Classical instruments for the appropriate repertoire, and perhaps unique in that they perform on both historical and modern set-ups (sometimes within the same concert). Indeed, for their Bruckner recording they had made for them a set of gut strings as near as possible to those used in Vienna in 1879. At the other end of the musical spectrum, a renewed interest in contemporary music has resulted in over forty additions to the new century's repertoire; as part of their 40th anniversary celebrations, they have invited a number of composer friends to contribute to a series of new fantasias along the lines of those by Henry Purcell..

Recent travels have included four visits to Russia. For most of their career they have been making regular trips to the USA, two of the more recent including marathon three-hour events in Lorin Maazel's private concert hall at his farm in Virginia. They have been marking 40 years of quartet playing with celebratory events right across the UK, and were Artists in Residence for the entire length of the 2010 Ryedale Festival in Yorkshire.

In November 2010 their second violinist, Jonathan Sparey, decided to retire after 37 years in the quartet, and the present CD includes the FSQ's first recordings with his young successor Colin Scobie. Indeed, this collection happily spans the actual handover, with Jonathan playing in Quartets 1 and 4, Colin in Nos.2 and 3.

Personnel:

Lucy Russell (first violin); Jonathan Sparey (Second violin – Quartets 1 & 4); Colin Scobie (Second violin – Quartets 2 & 3); Alan George (viola); Heather Tuach ('cello)

Additional Details & Marketing:

The CD will be fully serviced to all UK classical music press and radio. Advertising will include major classical music magazines and publications.

For more details, and to request a review sample, please contact John Cronin at Music & Media Consulting Limited.