



Sound Speeches of a Mysterious Soul

With the release of its 16th studio album, the complete recording of Schubert's string quartets, the Quatuor Modigliani sets an impressive milestone in the 19th year of its existence and, in addition to its extensive concert activities, also takes on the artistic direction of the international string quartet competition "Quatuor à Bordeaux" in May 2022 for the first time this year.



After years spent studying Schubert's substantial output of string quartets, the Modigliani Quartet has now recorded these works at three different locations: *"The intellectual encounter with a mysterious soul, the discovery of ineffable tone colours, the admiration for a masterly musical discourse whose ideas never cease to develop and inspire – that is an entire musical journey in itself that has left a lifetime impression on us. Recording the Octet two years ago was just the first building block of a project that was very close to our hearts and that we are now at last seeing fully realized with this comprehensive immersion in Schubert's world."*

The release of the album on the Mirare label on 21 January 2022 comes in time for Franz Schubert's 225th birthday. These four musicians seem to hit a contemporary nerve with their Schubert interpretations, judging by the reactions of international reviewers to their performances. For example, The West Australian wrote after one concert: *"... in the hands of the players, Schubert's musical magic embraced an audience which listened in absorbed silence."* In their complete recording, the French musicians pay particular attention to the different types of sound that are called for by the early and late works of the Austrian Romantic composer: *"On the recording, we play on modern instruments and with modern bows, but the early quartets are still completely informed by the Classical period. We have to remember how that could have sounded back then: airy, full of energy, very flexible. For the later quartets, we need a bigger, romantic sound with more weight from the bow and a stronger vibrato."* In keeping with this kind of approach, the musicians also chose three different recording venues: the Reitstadel concert hall in Neumarkt in Bavaria's Upper Palatinate region for the early quartets, the Théâtre-Auditorium in Poitiers for the middle quartets and the Salle de Musique in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, for the final four. The order and selection of works on each CD under appropriate titles reflect the four musicians' intense experience of Schubert's emotional and musical universe: **"Harmony"** (CD 1, quartets nos. 1, 4, 13), **"The Art of Song"** (CD 2, nos. 2, 6, 10), **"The Classical Spirit"** (CD 3, nos. 3, 8, 11), **"Sentiments of the Soul"** (CD 4, nos. 5, 9, 14) and **"Light and Shadow"** (CD 5, nos. 12, 7, 15).

Not unsurprisingly, the Modigliani Quartet is more in demand than ever with concert and festival organizers for its Schubert (but not just that). At the end of January, it will make eight whole appearances at what is arguably the most important classical-music festival in France, **"La Folle Journée"** in Nantes. And in the following months, the four will present Schubert quartets live at venues in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, including **Berlin** (24 March, Philharmonie), **Basel** (29 March, Stadtcasino), **Darmstadt** (7 April, Orangerie) and **Innsbruck** (21 April, Haus der Musik). The Modigliani Quartet's appearance at the venerable Wigmore Hall in **London** on 8 April with a Schubert-only programme (quartets nos. 4, 7, 13) is sure to be a particular highlight, with another concert currently planned to follow at the same venue on 10 September.

In addition, the Modigliani Quartet has itself for years been involved in organizing and directing festivals. After being in charge of the “Festival Saint-Paul de Vence” since 2011 and the “Rencontres musicales d'Evian” since 2014, the ensemble, named after the fin-de-siècle Italian painter and sculptor Amedeo Modigliani, in 2022 took on the artistic direction of “**Quatuors à Bordeaux**”, an international string quartet competition and festival. They were already in charge of the 2021 edition of the festival under the new motto “**Vibre!**”. Now, the first edition of the competition under their direction is to follow and will take place in the French city from 9 to 15 May.

Whether listeners hear Amaury Coeytaux (violin), Loïc Rio (violin), Laurent Marfaing (viola) and François Kieffer (violoncello) live in the concert hall or on a recording in the coming weeks, the quartet's “*phenomenal ensemble culture*” (Stuttgarter Nachrichten) is likely to give them a listening experience like the one described by the Luxembourgian classical-music journal Pizzicato in early 2021. Reviewing the previous Modigliani Quartet album, which received a Diapason d'Or, among other awards, it wrote: “*The longer you listen to their performance, even several times, the more you become convinced that they succeed in adding a cultivated element here that not only supports the music but allows it to blossom.*”



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