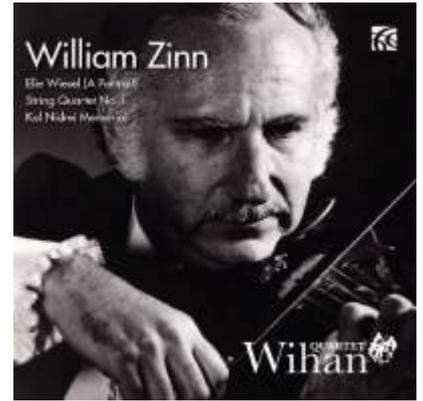


CD REVIEW 109

WILLIAM ZINN

Elie Wiesel (A Portrait), String Quartet no 1, Kol Nidrei Memorial.
Wihan Quartet (56.50)
Nimbus Alliance NI6256 (DDD)



William Zinn is not a household name. However, Nimbus must be congratulated on introducing us to him. I do regret that the sleeve notes are very scanty and tell us little about the composer.

We are told that he was a member of many orchestras, none of which are named. He performed under many famous conductors, none of whom are identified. He has composed over 500 chamber works and for almost every instrument, but there are no adequate details. He wrote A Tribute to the masters of 14 composers from Vivaldi to Debussy, a 24 movement string quartet which is not the item on this CD, A Klezmer Symphony, arrangements of Stephen Foster songs, Sousa Marches and 46 Opera excerpts for string quartet.

He was born in 1924 and is an eclectic having worked with, for example, with Ray Charles. Are we also to assume that he is Jewish bearing in mind the many works that are Hebraic?

It would have been helpful if the sleeve notes gave us this information.

Elie Wiesel is an author who lived an interesting life and endured inhumanity as a holocaust survivor and won the Nobel Peace prize in 1986. This composition dates from 2012. The first four minutes or so is largely single instruments but when this inactivity ceases, the music is rich and acceptable.

The String Quartet no 1 is in four movements namely andante, scherzo, requiem and a more lengthy fugato. It was composed in 1966 in memory of the cellist Benjamin De Miranda who had died at the age of 60. He was fond of Beethoven and Zinn wrote this work in the style of the great master. It is very good in parts but perhaps lacks an individual voice but most people will enjoy it. It is well-written for string quartet.

The Kol Nidrei Memorial of 1986 is dedicated to those who sacrificed themselves for the cause of freedom, the six million innocent Jews of the holocaust using the most sacred theme in Hebraic music. It is often very moving and it is clear that the composer has put his heart into this piece.

Often the music of all three works has a feeling of desolation about them which suits the inspiration but there may be some who might think that this is too much and therefore miss some of the beauty inherent in the scores. Above all, there is sincerity in this music.

The sound is very good and the Wihan Quartet from Czechoslovakia are first class and we must hear more from them. They have made recordings of Beethoven, Schubert, Dvorak and Smetana and these recording should be pursued.

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