

STRINGS

January 2019



INTO THE LIGHT

Telegraph Quartet
(Centaur Records)

Currently the quartet-in-residence at the San Francisco Conservatory, the Telegraph Quartet (Eric Chin and Joseph Maile, violins; Pei-Ling Lin, viola; Jeremiah Shaw, cello) have crammed a lot of career milestones into the five years they've been together: festivals and concerts all over the

world, top prizes at the Naumburg and Fischhoff competitions, and now their debut album, *Into the Light*. At only 40 minutes' listening time, the disc features three lesser-known works by well-known composers: Leon Kirchner, Anton Webern, and Benjamin Britten. Explaining the title in the liner notes, the group writes: "We love the idea of bringing these works further *into the light*, bringing them out of the shadows of the more often celebrated, albeit totally justified string-quartet favorites."

While many groups have recorded Webern's *Fünf Sätze* and Britten's *Three Divertimenti*, Kirchner's String Quartet No. 1 (1949) is far less widely known. Fans of the Bartók quartets will instantly notice a resemblance here, and the dynamism of the Telegraph Quartet's interpretation makes me hope that they will record the Bartók cycle in the future.

Webern's *Fünf Sätze* are cleanly and expressively played, though it's hard for any group to compete with the kaleidoscopic range of tone colors in the Alban Berg Quartet's Teldec recording from the 1970s. For my taste, the most outstanding tracks of *Into the Light* are those devoted to the *Three Divertimentos* by Benjamin Britten, an early work whose sophisticated language foreshadows his mature chamber music. Here, the Telegraph Quartet's interpretation sparkles with brilliant humor, balancing out the seriousness of the other works as they bring this exciting new disc to a close.

—Miranda Wilson