

Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet



Never mind how they got their name, these recorder tootlers are the best!

Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet - Nocturne = JADIN: Nocturne No. 3, J. C. BACH: Quartet in A major, HANDEL: Suite in G Minor, LOCATELLI: Concerto Grosso Op. 1 No. 11, SAMMARTINI: Symphony No. 10 in F Major, PACHELBEL: Canon in C, MOZART: Adagio & Fugue KV 546 - Channel Classics multichannel SACD CCS SA 22205, 65:10 ****:

For the latest disc for the enterprising Amsterdam classical label Channel Classics the Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet continues to explore the boundaries of music for a consort of recorders. They employ 18 different instruments on this album, ranging across the sonic spectrum from an 8-inch sopranino recorder to a 9 foot sub-contrabass. The selection of music by seven composers comes from the closing years of the Baroque period - works which begin to demonstrate a simplicity and clarity that is to become the standard in the approaching Classical period.

The big surprise to me here was the delightful version of the overplayed Pachelbel Canon, which would normally cause me to switch to the next track in a hurry. The work sounds fresh and highly melodious on the four little flute instruments, almost as if hearing it for the very first time. The closing Mozart Adagio

and Fugue, while lovely on glass harmonica as well as the pipe organ, takes flight with the recorder ensemble, and seems one of the master's most perfect compositions in this fine arrangement by the quartet members (who did all the arrangements on the CD). Some of the Gigue and Vivace movements in these suites and concertos tootle along with such gusto that at times it sounds almost like a calliope, and you could imagine circling around on a carousel. It would be interesting to find the original harpsichord version of the Handel or the string orchestra version of the Locatelli - if you have them in your collection - to hear right after the quartet's recorder version. Anyone who has ever played the recorder in school or been around recorder players will have additional appreciation for the virtuosity of the Loeki musicians - they never throw a clam, quite unlike your average recorder amateur!

The sound picture is very natural, with the small instruments not exaggerated in size but placed spatially well-defined from one another on the soundstage. The multichannel option adds width and depth to the sonic image vs. the stereo mix, as well as providing more "air" around the four players. Why anyone would want one of the super-high-end stereo-only SACD players (when multichannel is built into the chips anyway and doesn't compromise the stereo playback) is beyond me.

- John Sunier