



L BERKELEY

String Quartets Nos 1-3

Maggini Quartet

Naxos 8.570415 63:02 mins

BBC Music Direct

£5.99

The partnership between Naxos and the Magginis has opened up the British quartet repertoire, and also seen the Quartet itself growing in confidence and maturity. This CD is one of their first with Lorraine McAslan as leader, and, remembering her fine Bridge and Britten recordings, I had high hopes. I haven't been disappointed.

Berkeley's First Quartet explores a very British sort of neo-classicism, with shades of Bartók in the rhythmic drive of the outer movements, but a lyricism – which reminds me of Finzi – in the *Andante*. The Magginis encompass and characterise these potentially disparate styles with ease. The Second Quartet is more of a piece, with its three movements inhabiting a deeper emotional space. This was the period of the *Poems of St Teresa of Avila*, and the Magginis respond with a greater subtlety of blend, rubato, and – particularly from McAslan – portamento.

In many ways, the Third Quartet is the tightest structurally, with an underlying harmonic consistency in its four movements, leavened by a variety of texture and pace. The *Lento*, with its gradual build-up from other-worldly harmonics to an intense climax, is the heart of the work, and like everything on this disc, superbly realised. *Martin Cotton*

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

SOUND

★★★★★