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Pulse
Quatuor Eclisses
Ad Vitam

Marvelous outing from French quartet

Having previously reviewed a recording by the astoundingly good ensemble Quatuor Eclisses, I was most eager to hear this latest release. The title suggests a form of pulse or propulsion, and in music this suggests a rhythm or beat, perhaps leading in turn to that great human activity, dance.

These four vibrant Frenchmen—Gabriel Bianco, Arkaïtz Chambonnet, Pierre Lelièvre, and Benjamin Valette—impress from the start with a debut piece from composer Karol Beffa. *Les Météores* is a three movement work with an unmistakable nod toward Steve Reich; add to that a more raucous coloration and texture, and you have an astonishing work from a non-guitarist.

This quartet plays with striking clarity and precision, armed with a huge palette of nuanced sounds, topped with a great sense of drama, which suits the stunning arrangements of Bartok's *Popular Romanian Dances* and Joaquín Turina's *Danzas Fantásticas*. A gorgeous version of Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* is followed by one of my all-time favorite works—*Estancia*, the ballet by Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera. This arrangement and performance is the highlight of the album.

But there is also a hidden gem, a brand-new piece from Sérgio Assad! *One 4 All 4 One* was constructed around the personality traits of each member of the quartet and the great friendship within the group, so its movements are titled “Exuberance,” “Courtesy,” “Sensuality,” and “Rage.” For me this is one of Assad's best pieces yet. Highly recommended. —TP