

'Dreams & Prayers'

Golijov *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*

O'Leary *Soundshapes II* **N Roth** *Clarinet Quintet*

Paul Roe *cl/bcl* **Contempo Quartet**

Quartz (F) QTZ2097 (65' • DDD)



Contemporary quintets anchored by Roe's clarinet

It is perhaps surprising that few contemporary composers have taken advantage of the clarinet quintet's rich potential. The three recent works contained on this disc suggests that there is still a lot of musical mileage left in this relatively unexplored medium. Direct comparison with Mozart and Brahms may be unfair in the case of Osvaldo Golijov's *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*, Jane O'Leary's *Soundshapes II* and Nick Roth's *Clarinet Quintet*: none bears any direct relationship to past classical models.

Golijov's *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* is 'programmatic' on a number of levels. Based on the life of the eponymous 12th-century rabbi, its five-movement design also rather ambitiously depicts the various languages spoken throughout history by the Jewish people: Aramaic, Yiddish and Hebrew. If this suggests a rather dry quasi-philological exercise, then Golijov's music is anything but boring, shifting unpredictably from meditative stasis to dynamic dance-like moments in the second and third movements. The third is based on an earlier piece and the impression is of a rather piecemeal, diffuse work.

Nick Roth's single-movement *Quintet for klezmer clarinet and bass clarinet* is, on the contrary, fiercely focused, once it gets going. Based on a theme and variations, it shares with Golijov's quintet an attempt to explore the character and identity of the Jewish people, and makes effective contrasts between edgy, occasionally dissonant string passages and slowly evolving lines in the clarinet. Paul Roe and the Contempo Quartet are impressive throughout.

Pwyll ap Siôn