

– but, throughout, their response to the younger Bach's rhetoric is keenly felt. *Kate Bolton-Porciatti*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## Dvořák

### String Quintet No. 3; String Quartet No. 14

Lawrence Power (viola);  
Takács Quartet

Hyperion CDA68142 64:59 mins



Dvořák wrote his E flat major String Quintet just after he had completed the more celebrated

*American* Quartet in the summer of 1893, while enjoying an extended break from his duties in New York in the small town of Spillville, a Czech-speaking community in Iowa. The Quintet has many of the Quartet's most appealing qualities: open-hearted pentatonic melody, infectious rhythmic impetus and clarity of form. The Takács Quartet's interpretation in the first movement is at times a little soulful, a not inappropriate approach since Dvořák's muse in America was often inclined toward melancholy. Their attention to detail produces constantly arresting textures and the recorded balance allows the all-important viola lines full prominence, although at times I could have done with slightly more of the first violin. They provide full-throated tone in a moving account of the *Larghetto* and both *scherzo* and finale are captivating in this splendid and above all superbly considered performance.

Their performance of Dvořák's last string quartet (it was completed days after the G major Quartet designated as such) is unflinching

delightful. They certainly have the measure of impassioned lyricism tinged with slight neurotic quirks in the outer movements. The inner movements are not quite so assured. Their playing of the *scherzo* has the right amount of energy, but it lacks a certain passion and the slow movement, one of Dvořák's most harmonically experimental, could have been more searching. That said, theirs is a fine performance, if not quite on the level of the Quintet.

*Jan Smaczny*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## Fauré • Franck

**Fauré:** Violin Sonatas Nos 1 & 2;  
**Franck:** Violin Sonata in A  
Tedi Papavrami (violin),  
Nelson Goerner (piano)

Alpha Classics ALPHA 271 74:58 mins



Pianist Nelson Goerner's opening statement in Fauré's First Sonata is passionate, free and probing, and I was expecting violinist Tedi Papavrami to follow suit, but he is a little more discreet and gentle in tone. This is emphasised by the recording, which favours the piano in dynamic and in its position in the sound image. One's ears adjust after a while, and what's then clear is that this is a performance of subtlety and confidence, with Papavrami modulating his tone with effortless elegance in the *Andante*, lithe in the athletics of the *Allegro vivo*, and mercurial in the sudden mood changes in the finale.

The Second Sonata is, characteristically for late Fauré, a much more hermetic work: the sweeping melodies are still there,



'An ensemble to watch':  
the Engegård Quartet  
play Mozart with warmth

but the textures are often barer, and the harmonies more quirky and less predictable. The *Andante* spins a long, questing line, and finds both players in complete agreement, while the more energetic outer movements surge with an emotional logic.

There's technical aplomb throughout. This holds in the Franck, where the recording balance is truer, not only in the restrained first movement – Franck clearly paying homage to Fauré – but also in the turbulent *Allegro* in which the opening theme is a little too aggressive, but the quieter sections are beautifully judged. The *Recitativo* keeps up a high voltage throughout, and some of this is transferred to the finale, where the opening canon could be more relaxed to give contrast. An impressive, well-planned CD nevertheless. *Martin Cotton*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## Mozart

**String Quartets (Prussian):**  
**No. 21 in D, K575; No. 22 in B flat, K589; No. 23 in F, K590**

Engegård Quartet  
LAWOLWC1123 67:35 mins



Mozart's last three quartets – that 'troublesome work', as he once complained

to a friend – were composed in the hope of receiving financial compensation

from the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II. The king was a keen amateur cellist, and in order to give his instrument greater melodic independence than normal in a string quartet Mozart found himself having to devise a new style of writing in which all four players discoursed in the manner of an operatic ensemble.

The Norwegian Engegård Quartet responds well to the warmth and melodic ardour of these pieces. These aren't, perhaps, the most polished performances you're ever likely to hear – there are some slight lapses of intonation in the higher reaches of the first violin part, and there's a touch of harshness to the recorded sound – but they're likeable enough, with finely-judged expressive freedom in the slow movements, and an imaginative approach to providing subtle variation in repeats. There's a hint of impatience about the minuetts, particularly in the last quartet; and at the mid-point of the finale in the middle work of the group the tempo suddenly lurches forward – perhaps the result of an edit between different takes. One small point: in the slow movement of K589 the cellist and first violinist ought to have come to an agreement about how to play the ornament in the opening melody (the cellist seems to me to have got it right). But despite any such niggles, these are enjoyable performances, and this is clearly an ensemble to watch. *Misha Donat*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## BACKGROUND TO...

### Giusseppe Tartini (1692-1770)

Tartini (see Chamber Choice) was one of the most remarkable figures of 18th-century music. Born in Pirano in Istria, he studied with equal lack of success for the church, law and armaments before being forced to flee from Padua in 1710, violently denounced by the Archbishop who objected to his niece becoming Tartini's wife. Taking refuge in a monastery in Assisi, Tartini studied composition and acoustics, invented a new type of violin bow and gave violin recitals. The Archbishop of Padua is said to have pardoned Tartini when he became aware of his musicianship. In 1728 Tartini founded a school of violin playing in Padua and taught until 1768.

