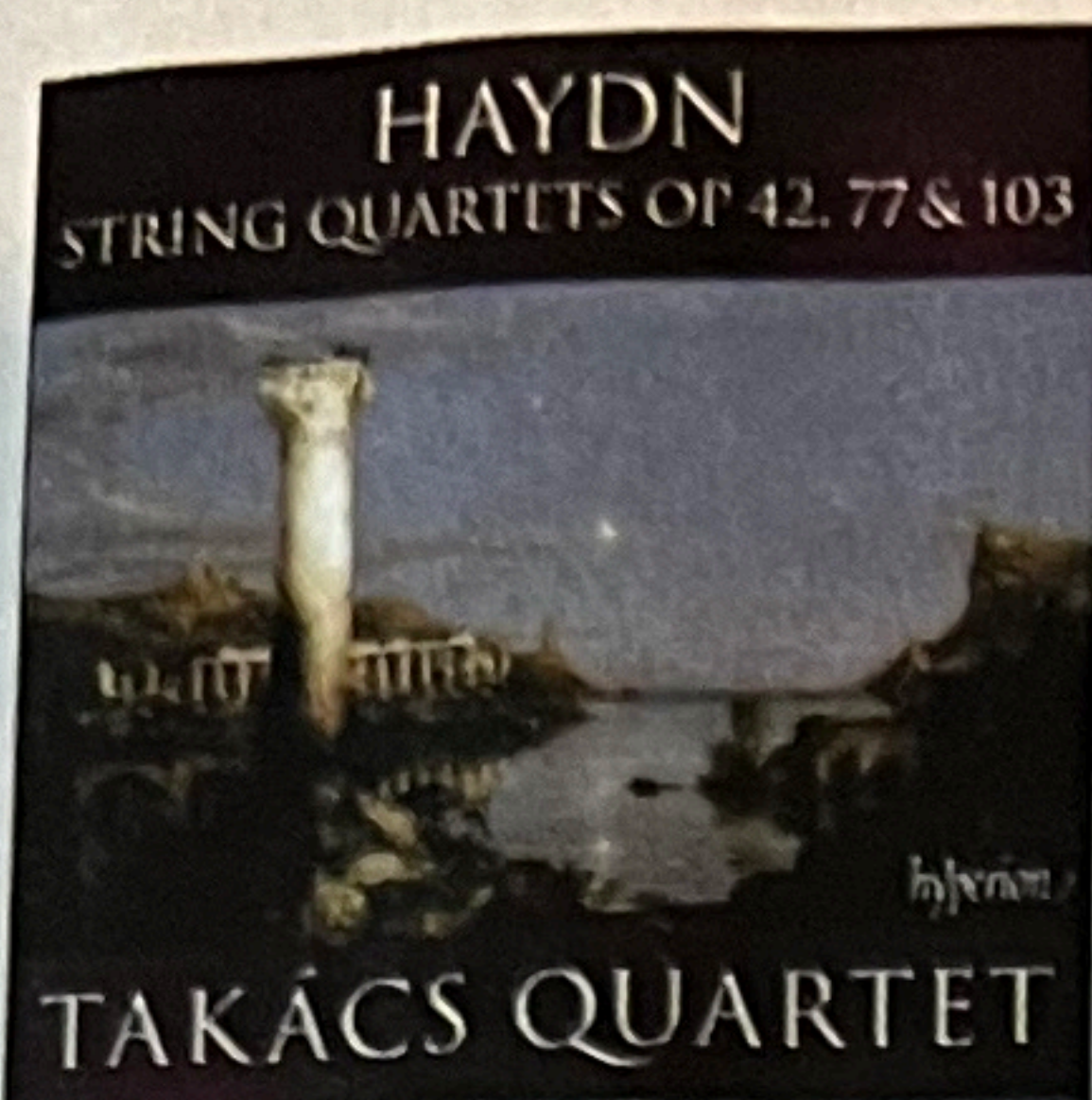


Chamber

CHAMBER CHOICE



Perfection meets warm affection in a superb set

Misha Donat says the Takács Quartet's immaculate new recording of Haydn is unlikely to be surpassed



Perfection guaranteed: the Takács Quartet is on dazzling form in Haydn

Haydn

String Quartets: in D minor, Op 42; in G, Op. 77 No. 1; in F, Op. 77 No. 2; in D minor, Op. 103

Takács Quartet

Hyperion CDA68364 72:35 mins

In 1799 Joseph Haydn embarked on a series of six string quartets commissioned by Prince Lobkowitz. The composer was in his late sixties, and becoming increasingly frail, and his remaining creative energy was mainly directed towards his second great oratorio, *The Seasons*, and the last three of the annual Masses he composed for Princess Esterházy. In the event, he managed to complete only two of Lobkowitz's quartets plus, after a long delay, the middle movements of a further quartet issued as Op. 103. Touchingly, the quartet torso contained a reproduction of Haydn's visiting-card – a quotation from his earlier part-song called *Der Greis* (The Old Man) setting the words, 'Gone is all my strength; old and weak am I'. And yet, none of this music betrays the slightest hint of tiredness – on the contrary,

it unfailingly shows Haydn at his boldest and most innovative.

One thing is certain about this new recording by the Takács Quartet: you will not hear better string quartet playing anywhere in the world today. The technical perfection can almost be taken for granted, but there is also the warmth and affection of the performances,

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and the insight into the visionary slow movements, especially the wonderful *Adagio* of Op. 77 No. 1. The Decca recording of these pieces by the original all-Hungarian Takács Quartet, now

more than 30 years old and long-since deleted, still sounds very well and has perhaps a touch more gypsy exuberance in the finales; but this new version, which throws in the lone small-scale Quartet Op. 42 as a bonus, is to be treasured.

**PERFORMANCE
RECORDING**

★★★★★
★★★★★

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