

CHAMBER

The mechanical rhythms of *Steve Reich* gain momentum in the hands of his London ensemble; *Stephen Hough* sets out his stall as a composer; plus *Bloch* is back, in the world premiere recording of his early Quartet

MUSIC CHAMBER CHOICE

Straight to the heart of a cycle

David Nice admires the Pacifica Quartet's first Shostakovich recording



SHOSTAKOVICH

String Quartets Nos 5-8

MYASKOVSKY

String Quartet No. 13

Pacifica Quartet

Cedille CDR 90000 127

117:00 mins (2 discs)

Available arkivmusic.com/bbcmusic

A gulf separates Cedille's lurid 'Soviet Experience' graphics from the brave new way this young American quartet tackles the 20th century's most canonised cycle. From the concert I heard in their Wigmore Hall series, featuring two Quartets from the sequence here, it was clear that the Pacifica players were doing for

The Pacifica's sense of musical argument is always impressive

Shostakovich's chamber music what conductor Vasily Petrenko has been successfully attempting with the Symphonies in Liverpool. Both place timeless musical values above any sledgehammer rhetoric that shouts 'Soviet tragedy!'

It's a pity the recorded sound fails to observe the space around the quartet that made the concert experience so unique: up front, the Pacificas can't achieve the same dynamic variety. Even so, their sense of the musical argument is always impressive, shining through their objective but never over-slick approach. The Pacifica Quartet



NEW HORIZONS:
 The Pacifica Quartet embark on Russian chamber repertoire

only seem to draw breath, like Shostakovich, between movements. As a result, the continuous Fifth Quartet just keeps coming at you, and its ideas in the development section are magnificently worked through. The Sixth Quartet has never seemed more genuinely tender, and the aphorisms of the Seventh Quartet are full of determination. Admirable, too, is the unusual directness of this straightforward, but never unfeeling, Eighth Quartet. Each two-CD set is to feature another quartet by a Russian contemporary

— here the dying Myaskovsky's final work, written in 1950. The Pacifica Quartet make its mixture of sad and happy seem oblique rather than glib, and again their straightforwardness makes the simple, songful *Andante* all the more touching. Lovely, cultured musicianship throughout.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★