



*Artistic Quality* **10/9** *Sound Quality*

**ANTONIN DVORÁK**  
**String Quartet No. 13; String Quintet**  
**Michael Tree (viola)**  
**Pacifica Quartet**  
**Cedille- 90000 059(CD)**  
**Reference Recording - This one; Gabrieli (Decca)**

The Pacifica Quartet's hearty and spacious account of Dvorák's Quartet No. 13 points up the work's unabashed symphonic character. Contrasted with the Guarneri's rather brisk and facile reading on Hyperion, Pacifica's generosity of tone and emphasis on rhythmic clarity excites the music's inherent energy, especially in the first movement, here sounding much like the composer's Eighth Symphony. Later, Pacifica's sensitive realization of the finale's varied moods brings to mind the same movement in the New World Symphony. Like the Gabrieli, Pacifica places the scherzo's sharp accents in bold relief and unfurls a plush carpet of lower string sound for the soulful Adagio. This is an invigorating and beautifully moving performance of one of Dvorák's greatest works.

No less accomplished is Pacifica's presentation of the String Quintet (1893), composed in America and abounding with native-derived themes. Again, abundant energy characterizes this performance as the players rightly soar on the dynamic crests of the first movement's themes (with the violins singing out beautifully). The Larghetto finds the ensemble quietly ruminating on Dvorák's deeply personal musings before lightening up for the cheery, easy-going finale. The closely miked recording provides for a visceral intimacy with the performers but denies the rich bass that a more resonant acoustic would allow. But, if I haven't already made clear, any lover of Dvorák's string quartets (and of string quartets in general) should buy this disc, and then prepare to be blissfully captivated for the next 75 minutes.

--Victor Carr Jr.