

# SUNDAY TIMES CULTURAL MAGAZINE

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**ELLIOTT CARTER**

★★★

**String Quartets Nos 1 and 5**

**Pacifica Quartet**

Naxos 8.559362



This disc, the first of two that will make all five Carter string quartets available in Naxos's American Classics series, allows one to listen straight from the pioneering, 40-minute Quartet No 1 (1951) to the 21-minute, divertimento-like No 5 (1995). The linguistic innovations of the first quartet, in which metrical intricacy and rhythmic flow are indistinguishable from formal structure, have served Carter throughout a creative career still flourishing today, but he has never written anything better. Not that the fifth quartet, with its witty mimicry of rehearsal gestures, isn't compelling. The Pacificas, who have given all five works in a prodigious single programme, play magnificently.

**Paul Driver**