



audiophile glee and a great deal of natural warmth at Island Studios in New York. This is classical music recorded the way it ought to be: tight, exciting and with plenty of very cool, very hip attitude. Like Elias Tanenbaum himself, these dudes let classical music do their talking.

Laurence Vittes

Wolossoff

Songs without Words

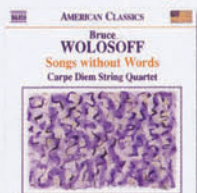
Carpe Diem Quartet (Charles Wetherbee,

John Ewing *vms* Korine Fujiwara *va*

Diego Fainguersch *vc*)

Naxos © 8 559663 (56' • DDD)

Wolossoff's perfectly formed miniatures demonstrate myriad influences



It was perhaps inevitable that Bruce Wolossoff would compose *Songs Without Words*, which is subtitled "18 Divertimenti

for String Quartet". The New York-born composer grew up playing in an assortment of bands whose stylistic bents would become essential components in his creative voice.

In *Songs Without Words*, performed on this joyous Naxos disc by the Carpe Diem Quartet, Wolossoff takes those styles and runs blissfully with them, charging through jazz, rock, blues and many other musical genres with what one might easily call unbridled glee.

These are not simulations of traditional tunes arranged for the unlikely ensemble of string quartet. They are beautifully crafted miniatures, each gazing back at an iconic style or artist, while taking inventive delight in the myriad colours and interactions that have long made this combination of stringed instruments so singular.

Amid nods to Beethoven and Stravinsky, Wolossoff sat at a synthesizer improvising on pop tunes before tweaking them into something entirely different from the originals. The results send the quartet through terrain and techniques not usually encountered in their day-to-day experience.

The members of the Ohio-based Carpe Diem Quartet, which commissioned the collection, live up to its name by seizing every opportunity to animate and caress Wolossoff's diverting brainstorms. They slide and wail, soar and stomp. The big question: do you really want to hear the whole shebang in one sitting, as you can on this recording? It may depend on where you're seated, but the quick answer is – yes.

Donald Rosenberg



Robert Henry's lyricism hits the mark

Nocturnal PIANISM

'Twelve Nocturnes and a Waltz'

C Atkins/Henry Waltz for the Lonely **Barber** Nocturne (Homage to John Field), Op 33

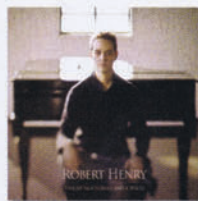
Chopin Nocturnes – Op 27 No 2; Op 62 Nos 1 & 2 **Fauré** Nocturnes – Op 36; Op 37 **Field**

Nocturne No 4, H37 **Grieg** Nocturne, Op 54 No 4 **Liebermann** Nocturne No 5, Op 55

Liszt Liebestraume – Notturmo No 3 **Respighi** Notturmo **Stanchinsky** Nocturne

Robert Henry *pf*

Muuz © 893394 001827 (74' • DDD)



Pianist Robert Henry appears to be an artist whose strong points are sensitivity and lyricism, and this mostly Nocturnes programme certainly reveals these traits to strong advantage.

Inner voices decisively sing out and project in the two Chopin Op 62 Nocturnes, although, by contrast, Op 27 No 2, the

Respighi *Notturmo* and the ubiquitous Liszt A flat *Liebestraume* have more than a few muffled, overpedalled moments.

Henry's cogent shaping of the Grieg Op 54 No 4 Nocturne's bass lines reinforce this music's often ignored backbone, while the two Fauré Nocturnes boast welcome dynamism and power. Henry is right at home in the Liebermann and Stanchinsky Nocturnes, both of which feature turbulent middle sections that best reveal each composer's individual voice. Given Henry's excellence elsewhere, I was surprised by the Field A major Nocturne's relatively wooden and prosaic interpretation.

However, Henry saves his most rapturous and texturally refined playing for his own transcription of Chet Atkins's *Waltz for the Lonely*. If you've always wanted to know what "Nashville Meets Godowsky" sounds like, savour this absolutely enchanting track, as I did about a dozen times before writing this review!

Jed Distler