

Classical CD Reviews

GERSHWIN: Porgy & Bess Selections; Lullaby for String Quartet; KERN: All the Things You Are; The Way You Look Tonight; Bill; The Song is You; Smoke Gets in Your Eyes; Once in a Blue Moon – Joan Enric Lluna, clar./ Alexander String Q.- Foghorn Classics

Wait! Don't skip this review—these performances will surprise and delight you!



Three breathtaking cello concertos
on 180 gram audiophile quality vinyl

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GERSHWIN (arr. Davis): Porgy & Bess Selections; Lullaby for String Quartet; KERN (arr. Miller): All the Things You Are; The Way You Look Tonight; Bill; The Song is You; Smoke Gets in Your Eyes; Once in a Blue Moon – Joan Enric Lluna, clarinet/ Alexander String Q.- Foghorn Classics CD2008, 48:15 [Distr. by Allegro] **:**

Okay, I am a little miffed that this CD is so short—surely there was more music that could have been added. And for those that are put off by the idea of a string quartet and clarinet playing selections from popular songs, don't be. I too was skeptical at first, thinking “oh no, not another one of *these*” in the most derogatory manner of mind I could muster. But Lluna is a favorite clarinet player of mine, and I have never heard any recording of his that I did not like, and the Alexander Quartet has gotten some sensational reviews from many quarters for a number of sterling recordings. Put them together and you experience no diminution of either; the highest standards are maintained. The only question is whether you like these kinds of arrangements. Honestly, even though I enjoy this disc very much, I don't know how many times I will return to it for that very reason, though this in no way slights the excellence of the production and performances.

But there is really no novelty in the approach. The notes make a big deal of the fact that noted arranger and composer Carl Davis did the Gershwin work—after being requested by Joan Lluna that he model them after the famous Heifetz arrangements—but in fact the Kern songs were arranged by the composer and scored for string quartet by Charles Miller, copyrighted back in 1942. So Jerome Kern saw some value in this, and they were recorded on 78s in 1949 by the Jacques Gordon String Quartet. The six here are quite famous and very well rendered, and Davis has captured the Heifetz spirit nicely in the Gershwin *Porgy* selections as well.

So the more I write about these the more I really *do* think I'll return to them! Lluna is an exquisite player and his soul-searching performances need to be heard. Foghorn doesn't release SACDs—unfortunately—but the sound on their discs is superb, warm, rounded, and instrumentally idiomatic. But a bit more music next time!

—Steven Ritter