



Hugo KAUDER (1888-1972)

String Quartet No. 1 (1921) [23:14]

String Quartet No. 2 (1924) [17:34]

String Quartet No. 3 (1926) [15:09]

String Quartet No. 4 (1927) [15: 25]

● The Euclid Quartet (Jameson Cooper and Jacob Murphy (violins); Luis Vargas (viola); Amy Joseph (cello)).

rec. 12-14 August, 12-13 November 2005, St. Bridget's Church, Solon, Iowa.

● **CENTAUR CRC 2840** [71:28]

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Hugo Kauder was born in Tobitschau, Moravia - now a part of the Czech Republic - in 1888. Self-taught as a composer, he played the viola in professional orchestras and in string quartets. He settled in the United States in the early 1940s having fled from the Nazis. He was a prolific composer with 19 string quartets weighing in amidst some three hundred other instrumental and vocal compositions. In addition to composing and teaching he was the author of a respected book on counterpoint that was published in 1960.

From the first measures of the first quartet the listener is captivated by the dense and somewhat jagged writing, and then we are quite surprised by a slow movement that is richly tonal and lush and quite beautiful. Kauder tended to write his most passionate and personal music for his own instrument, and as such, the viola gets some juicy morsels. The third movement is fugal and the interplay of melodic ideas and subtle rhythmic gestures is fascinating.

The second quartet is much more romantic, staying pretty firmly in the realm of tonality with the occasional strong dissonance thrown in for variety. Like the first quartet, it ends with a big fugue. Quartet No. 3 is fairly brief and is based on a Czech folksong. One is reminded of the music of Vaughan Williams here as Kauder makes ample use of modal harmonies and long, sweeping and imitative lines.

The fourth quartet is cast in five short movements that the composer described as "character

pieces". Each movement is taut and heavily infused with modal melodies again harking to Vaughan Williams, Delius and other British "pastoral" composers.

The Euclid Quartet has a refined warm, rich tone, precise ensemble and spot-on intonation. They play with great expression, and the subtle use of gestures such as the occasional portamento - always included at the perfect moment and with impeccable good taste - makes for more than seventy minutes of thoroughly enjoyable listening. This disc was one of the more pleasant and unexpected surprises to come across the desk in a while. One can only hope that the Euclid and other performers will explore more of this composer's work.

Kevin Sutton