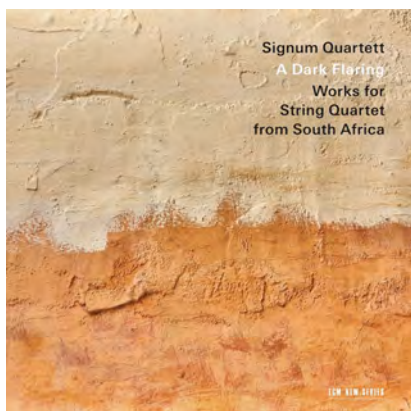




MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

A Dark Flaring. Signum Quartett. ECM.

This collection of string quartet music by South African composers reflects the joy and the tragedy of the remarkably rich cultural heritage of that land. The six composers here draw from both European and African inspirations, with the oldest music going as far back as the first half of the 20th century, with music by South African natives who trained at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Arnold van Wyk's *Five Elegies for String Quartet* are pithy, quietly expressive works, while Prialux Rainier's *Quartet for Strings* is a much meatier composition, using the harmonic language of early Strauss and Schoenberg. It is deserving of a wider audience. The music from this century covers a wildly divergent range of styles, from Mokale Koapeng's lovely and lyrical *Komeng* to the withering energy of Matthijs van Dijk's (*rage*) *rage against the*. Péter Louis van Dijk's *inyembezi* is a compelling marriage of the late Renaissance music of John Dowland and percussive effects meant to imitate native Xhosa instruments. The contrast of anguished tones with resigned dirges is reminiscent of Shostakovich. Robert Fokkens also portrays a kind of despair in his three *Glimpses of a half-forgotten future*, with the use of microtonality adding a layer of subdued tension. As expected from ECM, the performances and recording are first rate. **PB**

Further Listening: Shostakovich String Quartets #3, 7, & 8 (St. Lawrence SQ/EMI)



MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

Postcards from Ukraine, Vol. 1: Violin Miniatures. Toccata Next.

I have a soft spot for violin character pieces and for Slavic music, and this terrific album scratches both itches. Melnychenko is a superb violinist with a great tone, and he, de Jager, and Martin sell every one of these pieces. Mykola Lysenko's *Ukrainian Rhapsody* is a not-so-miniature that takes the norms of the rhapsody—slow vs. fast sections, catchy melodies, and virtuosity—and ennoble them with above-average interplay between the violin and piano. Borys Lyatoshynsky appears several times. In his *Two Pieces*, a tolling, chromatic Andante creates an unsettled feeling that is fun-mirrored in the Allegro Scherzando. His *Three Pieces on Tajik Folk Themes* are less weighty but still darkly shaded, while “Melody” harks back to late Romantic melancholy. Vasyl Barvinsky's “Chanson Triste” is warm and bittersweet. The “Romance” from Anatoliy Kos-Anatolsky's ballet *The Shawl of Dornbush* is firmly in salon music territory, while “Dzvinka's Dance” is spiced with folk elements. Ivan Karabits' “Musician” is a tawny blend of local color and adventurous compositional techniques. Mykola Kolesa's *Three Kolomyiky* take the song-infused dances of the Carpathian Hutsuls and fit them nicely into concert-hall dress. A fine program, beautifully played. **Stephen Estep**

Further Listening: Chamber Works by Dmitri Klebanov (ARC Ensemble/Chandos)



MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

Firedove. Anna Lapwood. Sony.

Lapwood, 30, has already built up quite the online following of over two million people; at a recent concert at the Cologne Cathedral, which holds about 4,000, a positively Biblical 13,000 flesh-and-blood people filled the streets hoping to get in. Her debut album, *Images*, on the Signum label, showed off transcriptions of Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* and Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*; her first album for Sony, *Luna*, was again filled with unusual fare—selections from soundtracks, transcriptions, and a lot of newer pieces. *Firedove* is in a similar vein: appearances from Alan Menken's *Hunchback*, Hans Zimmer's *Inception*, and a transcription for saxophone (played by Jess Gillam) and organ of Rachel Portman's “Flight.” Other guests include violinist Elena Urioste and the Chapel Choir of Pembroke College, which Lapwood directed for several years. There are newer pieces by composers like Ola Gjeilo and Poppy Ackroyd and nods to tradition with Vierne and Durufle. The cover of Bob Dylan's “To Make You Feel My Love” is sensitively sung but rhythmically square and fails to take off. Otherwise, it's an emotionally rich and atmospheric success, and the organ and sonics of the Nidaros Cathedral in Norway are presented in full bloom. **SE**

Further Listening: Cameron Carpenter: *Cameron Live* (Telarc); Virgil Fox: *The Fox Touch* (Crystal Clear)