

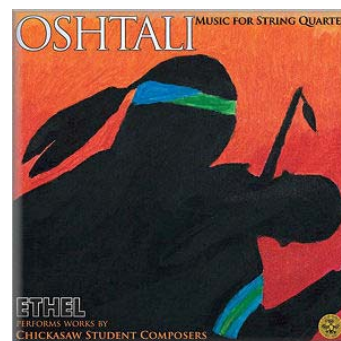


REVIEW

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This disc is the outcome of a project under which sixteen compositions for string quartet by young twenty-something composers of Chickasaw lineage have been recorded. Several composers are represented by two pieces.

Berry's *Fantasia* is a gritty urgent little assault. It is part Herrmann and part Bartók with an insinuatingly mesmerising haunted central interlude. The death of her father is a focus for Duty's *Here's the Hurt*. Emotions that are by turns subdued and piercingly razor-like are reflected in the music. After two string quartet-only works – yes Ethel is a string quartet – *Yeah ... I hit like a girl* by Shackelford instantly commands attention with its addition of a drum and shouted *Ki-ai*. A martial arts-inspired piece, it's vital and varied but rather too short for its own good and ends perfunctorily. *Holhchifo Ki'yo* by Dylan Bennett has some dance-like music that occasionally sounds Hungarian to me. It's a self-portrait of the composer. The sweetly elegiac tone is very memorable at 2:00 but there's room for dissonance too. *Concerto for Strings* is by John McAlester. Another reserved piece from a composer who is partial to the Mahler symphonies and soundtracks. Mahler is to the fore but then so are the later quartets by Beethoven and Dvorák. Aubrey Halford's *Lullaby* is the composer's breaking away, at least temporarily, from her predilection or compulsion for works of conflict. It has a Bachian serenity and well suits her inspiration to create a mood-piece for laying someone tenderly to sleep. Courtney Parchcorn's *Enough* again meets its mission of conveying some sense of the composer being pulled in four directions. There's a caustic edge to her writing. *Innominate* is a little piece by Johnathan Bomboy. It adds a piano to the quartet and tracks the music through radiant contemplative Einaudi territory. Ryan Lee May is a guitar senior and *Solo* is his first composition. It has a touch of Rodrigo about it although clearly it is from a troubled place. Bomboy returns with *Lucky's Charm* which again includes a drum in the score. The piece is essentially a jolly Civil War-style folksy populist piece. *The Devil's Advocate* is by Katie Barrick and in its Bachian start seems set to stay in the same territory as the Aubrey Halford. Soon the music morphs into a lively Celtic dance/jig. Back to Halford again for *Stages* – a very emotionally and rewarding serious piece in which the episodes flow together with some sense of cogency. That said, the ending seemed to happen rather than to need to happen. Back to Dylan Bennett for *Seven Seas* – a 'piratey tune' (words of the composer) rather folksy and full of vitality. Shackelford's *River of Our Times* includes a rattle. It reflects something of the long history of the Chickasaw nation and picks up on the folk mythos of Three Turtles in the River of Time. It is tender, melodic, tonal. There's a touch of Kodály here and it has an imaginative ending. Parchcorn's *Innocence* is another tender folksy piece inspired by the composer's visit to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota and specifically the innocence of the children she met there. Stasen Whitehead wrote *Sigur*, the Icelandic word for victory. The music has a Philip Glass-like insistence with conflict cutting across the long lines.



A fascinating showcase and something in which the young composers and those behind the project can take some pride.