

Sequenza 21/

The Contemporary Classical Music Community

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Ethel mentors young composers

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Oshtali - Ethel performs works by Chickasaw Student Composers Thunderbird Records



For their latest recording, contemporary string quartet **Ethel** traveled from their stomping grounds in New York City to Oklahoma. There, they recorded pieces by high school and college age Native American student composers: all of them students of Jerod Impichchaachaaha Tate at the Chickasaw Arts Academy.

To my knowledge, this is the first recording entirely devoted to the music of Native American student composers. And while it would be unfair to point out standouts and more 'gradually emerging works' in such a collection, there's plenty about which to enthuse. This is a talented group of youngsters who've clearly taken a great deal of care to write sensitively, imaginatively and, in many cases, quite idiomatically for strings. It's clear that both Tate and Ethel have engaged in a labor of love: diligently mentoring these students and preparing well for the recording. The playing is energetic, accurate, and enthusiastic: more than most composers hope for from their string quartet debut!

Another aspect that's worthy to note is the stylistic diversity of the pieces. There's never a sense that this is a CD that is solely about Native American signatures, although these are incorporated quite organically into some of pieces contained therein. Rather, the students are encouraged to create works that draw upon the many different types of music that engage them: classical, modern, folk, and pop. One student even name checks Icelandic post-rockers Sigur Rós!

Thus, *Oshtali* is a respectfully curated, well conceived educational project that also proves to be a lively compilation of works for string quartet.