

**a** **CARTER** Cello Sonata.<sup>1</sup> *Figment*.<sup>2</sup> *Figment No. 2*, “Remembering Mr. Ives.”<sup>3</sup> *Enchanted Preludes*.<sup>4</sup> *Scrivo in vento*.<sup>5</sup> *Gra*.<sup>6</sup> *Con leggerezza pensosa*.<sup>7</sup> *Fragments: No. 1*;<sup>8</sup> *No. 2*.<sup>9</sup> *Elegy*<sup>10</sup> • Johannes Martens (vc);<sup>1-4, 7-10</sup> Joachim Kjelsaas Kwetzinsky (pn);<sup>1</sup> Tom Ottar Andreassen (fl);<sup>4, 5</sup> Andjei Maevski (cl);<sup>6, 7</sup> Anders Nilsson,<sup>7-10</sup> Yi Yang<sup>8-10</sup> (vn); Anders Rensvik (va)<sup>8-10</sup> • 2L 54 (Hybrid multichannel SACD: 64:22)

Despite all the attention having been and continuing to be focused on Elliott Carter in celebration of his 100th birthday last December, here’s a worthy disc that might slip under the radar, which would be a shame. Well programmed and impeccably played, it offers a view of several complementary aspects of Carter’s composing, old and new (the oldest being the 1939 *Elegy*, and the newest *Figment No. 2*, from 2001). Except for the four-movement Cello Sonata (1948), all of the works fit into the compact, single-movement format he has favored for intimate pieces of chamber music over the past 20 years or so, and though none of them have previously been neglected on disc, this selection seems especially engaging and revealing.

Figments and Fragments: Chamber Music by Elliott Carter  
AUDIO CD; HYBRID SACD  
2-L

 Buy from amazon.com

Carter’s intricate craftsmanship—his ability to construct scores that propose their own convincing logic and drama—even when the details are difficult to decipher—has been frequently commented upon; by beginning its program with the ingeniously designed and accessible Cello Sonata, the Martens ensemble prepares the listener for the more concise and disjunct works to follow. Both *Figment* and *Figment No. 2*, for solo cello, have a higher degree of incident packed into a compressed space, but despite their bristling textures and soaring lines, they share with the Sonata a similar songfulness, almost an urgency to sing. This same intensity energizes the solos for flute (*Scrivo in vento*) and clarinet (*Gra*), whether their melodies appear spiky, jaunty, or circuitous. Multiplied by two (*Enchanted Preludes*) or three (*Con leggerezza pensosa*) instruments, the briskly syncopated rhythmic impulses keep the music lively and buoyantly interactive.

The final three works, for string quartet, employ distinct strategies to create somewhat different moods. *Fragment No. 1*, a dedication to the memory of the composer’s friend David Huntley, is limited to string harmonics and pizzicato, and conveys a chilling, somber, and mesmerizing atmosphere. *Fragment No. 2*, expanding upon the independent, contrasting, and interrelated instrumental roles introduced in the Cello Sonata, has a gripping tension and haunting demeanor that simply stops, without resolution. Wisely, they choose to end with a return to early Carter, the *Elegy*, originally for cello and piano, in its 1946 revision for string quartet, where the wistful, chromatic, Coplandesque melody offers a soothing, satisfying conclusion to an altogether successful program. **Art Lange**