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Album review: Attacca Quartet members prove themselves as John Adams' fellow travelers



Young New Yorkers the Attacca Quartet have found the ideal vehicle for channeling some of that city's unbridled energy in a new album of works by John Adams, released by Azica records.

Violinists Amy Schroeder and Keiko Tokunaga, violist Luke Fleming and cellist Andrew Yee bring panache as well as tremendous confidence to Adams' treacherous music.

Best of all, they capture his infectious energy, which is particularly vivid in the short title piece, *Fellow Traveller*, from 2007, as well as the 10 movements in *John's Book of Alleged Dances*, which dates from 1994.

There is a lot to smile about in the names of these movements: Rag the Bone, Alligator Escalator, Stubble Crotchet and Toot Nipple are the kookiest examples. And what Adams does with his trademark repeated motifs and overlapping rhythms is pretty amazing.

Most serious, in the sense of requiring serious listening, is the two-movement *String Quartet* from 2008.

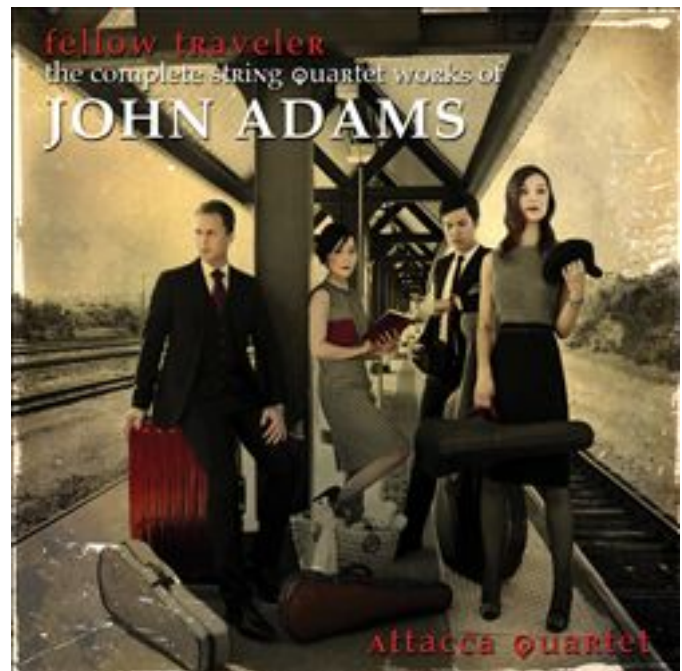
Overall, there is an overall insistence to this music that defies a long listening session.

Just like after a New York City workday, absorbing the full album in one go put my nerve endings on edge and made me want to shut myself away in a still, quiet place for a while. But that's a personal problem, not a statement on the quality of the music here.

There is a Canadian connection in all of this: the album notes point out that the Attaccas were introduced to and initially coached in John Adams' music by the St Lawrence String Quartet. Also, 10 years into their professional existence, this foursome is finally ready to take on nine other ensembles in the 11th Banff International String Quartet Competition in August.

Based on their work in this album, they will be formidable competitors.

Azica has a shamefully poor website, so for details as well as audio samples, go to the Attacca Quartet website here.



John Terauds

BY JOHN TERAUDS ON JUNE 11, 2013