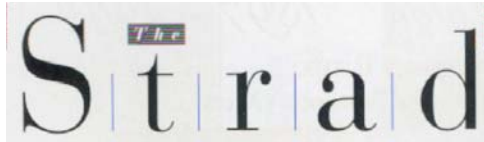


VERTAVO QUARTET

April 2004

MENDELSSOHN

Quartet in A major

NÆRGÅRD

String Quartet no. 8

BRAHMS

String Quartet op. 51 no. 2

At the end of the month Norway's **Vertavo Quartet**, whose members are in their mid-30s, proved they don't need the concessions allowed to young players. This is simply a high-quality ensemble, age apart. Like the Dorics, they also played Mendelssohn's A major Quartet, to whose opening Adagio introduction they brought not only an intensely intimate ensemble, but a wonderful collective bloom. The Vertavos play with stands practically touching each other, as if aiming for the closest possible interconnections. The warmth of their second movement deepened on the return of the main theme – as if indelibly marked by the turbulent central fugato section – though the leader, Øyvør Volle, could have relaxed more in the third movement's song over its

charming plucked accompaniment. The group showed dedication, technical skill and, above all, great imagination in Per Nørgård's striking String Quartet no.8 Night Descending, realising its strangely beautiful and disturbing soundworlds with compelling commitment. But the closing Brahms Quartet op.51 no.2 is where the Vertavos showed their mastery. It's a work which is clearly under their skin, and they brought to it a great degree of comfort and a seamless range of communal expression, from boldness and rigour to rich vibrancy and elastic phrasing. Of course, the chemistry has to be right to achieve playing like this, but the Vertavos have also been putting in the hours – they've already been playing together for 20 years. ■