
Infinite enrichment

By IFAN PAYNE

REVIEWS

THE KRONOS Quartet has redefined our notions of what a string quartet should play, what it should sound like and what it should look like.

Since it was formed in 1973 the quartet has, through its concerts, records and series of American radio programmes, helped to demolish the barriers between our socially-defined musical styles which have so constrained our appreciation of music.

Kronos has presented living composers and contemporary music of all styles as being central to our musical life.

In its Thursday evening concert at St David's Hall, Cardiff, Kronos played a num-

ber of works already well known from its records and broadcasts.

Ben Johnston's beautiful *Amazing Grace* becomes lovelier on every hearing. *Round Midnight, Re: Person I Knew* and *Purple Haze* showed Thelonious Monk, Bill Evans and Jimi Hendrix to be composers worthy to be heard in the same concerts as Bartoq and Beethoven.

Philip Glass's *Mishima Quartet* has long been a standard of the Kronos repertoire, but his *Company* was a work new to me. This is a quartet of gossamer delicacy that was every bit as beguiling as the gorgeous *Mishima* work.

Terry Riley's large-scale *Conquest of the War Demons* filled the second half of the concert.

Heard live, the Kronos sound is pleasantly more delicate and smoother-toned than it is on its two closely-microphoned recordings.

These are four virtuosi whose astonishing range, technically and stylistically put to shame and place in a proper perspective the finite vision of the keepers of the museums for standard string quartets.

And it goes without saying, almost, that St David's Hall, which is so often filled with the narrow-minded who want their musical biases reinforced, was relatively empty for this concert of musical exploration, excitement and infinite enrichment.