

## KAUFMANN Chamber works (ARC Ensemble)

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**Author:** Peter Quantrill

Assistant to Bruno Walter, friend of Albert Einstein, author of an ethnomusicological dictionary in common use today: Walter Kaufmann has not been forgotten since his death in 1984 but his music never surfaced as part of Decca's Entartete Musik collection or other projects dedicated to Jewish émigrés. Thus it has taken the enterprising Toronto-based ARC Ensemble to make the first recording dedicated to his work as the third instalment of a 'Music in Exile' series, after volumes dedicated to Paul Ben-Haim (9/13) and Jerzy Fitelberg (11/15).

The sinuous, otherworldly character of the album's opening music immediately gives notice of Kaufmann's singular story. Born in Karlsbad (now Karlovy Vary) in 1907, Kaufmann abandoned a promising composing/conducting career in 1933 and sailed to Bombay. There he soon became director of European music for All-India Radio (AIR) and wrote all the music played here, before moving to Canada after the war, thence to Indiana, where he became a popular professor of both Beethoven and 'Oriental Art Music'.

One of Kaufmann's own teachers had been Franz Schreker, composer of *Die ferne Klang*, and his quartet-writing has a 'distant sound' all its own, coloured by the Indian music that he had been studying even before his move eastwards. The slow movement and Trio of the conventionally structured Eleventh Quartet run up and down open fifths and scales in a spirit of meditative serenity. However, there's plenty of Bartókian grit in Kaufmann's oyster: the *Allegro barbarico* indication of the quartet's finale speaks for itself. The Seventh Quartet follows the five-movement plan of Bartók's Fifth, with a spiky, bluesy central Scherzo succeeded by a tremolo-backed *Andantino* evoking the nocturnal air of Bombay rather than Budapest.

The ARC Ensemble have prepared this unfamiliar repertoire with care and a feeling for its beauties. I enjoyed Erika Raum's sweet tone in the brief Second Violin Sonata and her quicksilver repartee with pianist Kevin Ahfat in Kaufmann's sudden turns of thought. He wrote prolifically (including more than two dozen operas), and the ensemble evidently had a job sifting through the output. The modal drift of his harmony can wear thin under prolonged exposure though the individual works show a finely judged sense of when enough and no more has been said. Arranging a Violin Sonatina for clarinet leavens the album's scoring and underlines a jazzy

perfume to its mercurial Intermezzo and moody concluding Canzonetta. Deeper, angrier currents course through the single-movement Septet; and if there is more material of its quality in the Kaufmann archives, Chandos and the ARC Ensemble would do everyone a favour by producing a second volume.



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String Quartet No 11

Violin Sonata No 2

String Quartet No 7

Sonatina No 12

Septet

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