LONGING – CHAMBER MUSIC OF REZA VALI  
CARPE DIEM STRING QUARTET; David Korevaar; Dariush Saghafi  
MS1738

This sixth album from the Iranian composer Reza Vali is dedicated to love and longing as heard through a lavishly coloured, musically exhilarating kaleidoscope of Persian and Western forms and content. It is the improvisational nature of the three works written for and performed by the Carpe Diem Quartet with great gusto and an emphasis on exotic folk and Eastern influences that produces the most powerful effects, as in the eight intriguing meditations of Ormavi, told, the composer says, ‘from a solely Persian perspective’.

The 18-minute Raak, No 15 in the composer’s ‘Calligraphy’ series based on a Persian system of modes similar to Indian ragas, is even more unpredictable in its mood and movement; the wealth of evocative sounds and sources Vali uses to achieve his many climaxes include a melody of Brahms-ian breadth and beauty and, at the end, a stunning, brief fragment from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

Vali generously and provocatively provides two different versions of Āshoob, No 14 in the ‘Calligraphy’ series. In its original form for quartet and the Persian hammered dulcimer known as a santoor it is a tangibly otherworldly experience; arranged for string quartet alone it is hypnotic in another way, reminiscent at times of Bartók’s use of folk sources for melody and energy.

To fill out the disc, the Carpe Diem violinist Charles Wetherbee and the pianist David Korevaar play Three Romantic Songs, written for the composer’s wife, paying homage to Brahms and concluding with a ‘Tango Johannes’ which Vali describes as Brahms ‘trying to dance the tango with Clara Schumann’, and Love Drunk, consisting of four pleasantly inebriated folk songs.

Laurence Vittes