

Twilight Covers uses lines by Rabindranath Tagore in a relatively lengthy piano elegy touching on emotional depths without risk of portentousness.

There is sensitive playing from Matthew Schellhorn in this latter piece, as there is equally by the performers in the ensemble collections. Those responsive to, say, the deft poise of Howard Skempton or the barbed wit of Laurence Crane will find much to engage and absorb them.

Richard Whitehouse

Sciortino

Diario di un poeta^a. Piano Trio^b.

Piano Quartet^c. Piano Quintet^d

^aAmbra Piano Trio (Joel Bardolet Vilario *vn*)

^bAlessio Pianelli *vc* ^cMarco Scilironi *pf*;

^dSwiss Music Ensemble 'New Wave'

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Italian contemporary music has struggled to find renewed focus in recent years, with

Orazio Sciortino (*b*1984) evidently among its leading lights. A formidable pianist (witness his set of opera transcriptions by Liszt and Tausig) as well as composer, the piano fairly dominates this disc of chamber works written during 2012-13,

but *Diario di un poeta* draws on songs from a decade earlier in music that eloquently reflects the confessional texts by Giuseppe Ungaretti.

The remaining pieces explore possibilities of instrumental dialogue over a single movement, with the Piano Trio moving from the lyricism of a 'song without words' towards much more ambiguous expression and the most tentative of resolutions. The longest of these works, the Piano Quartet unfolds across several sections as if paraphrases on the opening material of an increasingly fractious, even unstable nature. Not dissimilar in its formal processes, the Piano Quintet draws on Schubert's *Trout* for its instrumentation though not in its oblique interplay, which becomes ever more quixotic on its way to the fugitive and insubstantial closing bars.

This is music, then, which offers a fresh and often illuminating perspective on archetypal media, and whose exacting yet never mindless virtuosity is ably met by the members of those ensembles for whom these pieces were written. Excellent sound and succinctly informative introduction from Sciortino, who is clearly a composer to watch (a 'self-portrait' of his piano works is imminent on Sony). Those new to his output should certainly investigate this release. **Richard Whitehouse**