

Brahms - String Quintet No.1 Op.88 & No.2 Op.111 (2002)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 14 July 2015 15:55 -

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String Quintet No.1 Op.88: 1. *Allegro non troppo ma con brio* 2. *Grave ed appassionato - Allegretto vivace - Tempo 1 - Presto - Tempo 1* 3. *Allegro energico*

String Quintet No.2 Op.111:

4. *Allegro non troppo, ma con brio* 5. *Adagio* 6. *Un poco Allegretto* 7. *Vivace ma non troppo presto*

Hagen Quartett + Gérard Caussé - Viola

Like Mozart, Brahms was a bit uncomfortable writing string quartets, where the desire to maintain an absolutely democratic discourse among the participants often led to overly dense textures and rhythmic heaviness. The extra viola part offered by the quintet medium, however, allowed both composers to relax a bit and write music with the richness of texture they both loved, without forcing. These two works really don't seem to get the attention that they deserve, either on recordings or in concert, but they are both vintage Brahms. Fortunately, Naxos seems to be dedicated to a complete survey of the chamber music of the great composers, and they are working with a very fine stable of artists. This disc is no exception. ---David Hurwitz, amazon.com

Late Brahms is a special thing. Like opening a bottle of Pauillac '82, get it right and a whole new world of experience opens up, one tinged with a delicious melancholy, infused with the golden honeyed light of September. Here the vicarious joys of nostalgia come braided with the sad ache of terminal decline. A heady infusion of rusting trees and summer's dying breath. Here is everything that Time teaches us. Paul Celan put it thus: 'Autumn eats its leaf out of my hand: we are friends.' A telling line, and one that runs right through this stellar recording of op.111.

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How this disc has been allowed to slip out of the DG catalogue is a mystery even Sherlock would struggle with. As lovely as op. 88 is, it is Op. 111 that is worth the often eye-watering prices this disc goes for in Ye Olde Marketplace, especially with the performance the Hagen Quartet gives here (accompanied by violist Gérard Caussé). One of Brahms's most sublime slow movements is teased out with all due care and attention - one minute weaving gossamer threads of sound, the next its throbs of passionate brio. At times one recognises the ethereal realm of Beethoven's late quartets, but the rapturous melodies are pure late Brahms.

Breath in and breath deeply of autumn's mulch and musk: 'From the nuts we shell time and we teach it to walk: then time returns to the shell.' --- Thropplenoggin, amazon.com

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