



Johannes Brahms: Complete String Quintets

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I have encountered the Mandelring Quartet in their earlier recordings of Schubert and Mendelssohn, where I found their playing wonderfully alert and impassioned. They come from the school of quick tempos and dramatic juxtaposition, rather than of warmth and relaxed romanticism. Sometimes I have found them a bit too fast and brusque, but without doubt they are a very fine group.

The Brahms quintets are late works, but with the Mandelring they do not sound at all autumnal. I've sometimes complained when groups take the opening of the F major quickly—I've preferred the warmer approach of the Raphael Ensemble—but here, at a pretty good pace, it sounds quite right (and isn't the opening theme one of Brahms's nicest melodies?). Fast passagework, as in the last two movements of the F major, is very crisp and beautifully controlled. Through all of this, the emotional side of Brahms is well served. This is modern Brahms, polished and crisp, never sentimental or stodgy. Unless you're wedded to old-world Brahms, you'll love this!