



J. Brahms: Clarinet Chamber Music

aud 92.554

EAN: 4022143925541



Audiophile Audition (Gary Lemco - 2007.02.15)

In surround sound, Daniel Raclot's cello opening makes a lovely A Minor triad to which the clarinet and piano respond to begin the 1891 Trio. Clarinetist Arthur Campbell is a pupil of Robert Marcellus, renowned for several recordings with George Szell. Campbell projects a sweet sonority in the middle and low (chalumeau) registers of his chosen instrument, the delights of which first struck Brahms when he heard Richard Muehlfeld of the Meningen Orchestra. The longest movement, the Adagio, conveys an autumnal sensibility in the manner of a folk song. The soft pizzicati and demure piano part from Jean-Pascal Meyer (rec. 7-10 November 2005) create an intimately haunted atmosphere. A rusticity of feeling infiltrates the third movement, which sways in the manner of the Op. 65 Liebeslieder Walzer. The middle section is Schubert, a laendler that almost frolics with good nature. The cello takes up the last movement Allegro, whose Hungarian ethos revels in rhythmic shifts (hemiola) from 6/8 to 2/4. Nice balance and separation in the mid-range, courtesy Ludger Boeckenhoff.

For my money, Campbell shines in the opening of the F Minor Sonata (1894), where he infuses the chromatic lines with dark passion, abetted in each figure by pianist Frances Renzi. In the more subdued passages, the two make for some expressive intimacy on a high order of execution - potent rainy-day music. Both the Andante un poco Adagio and second intermezzo, the Allegretto grazioso, sound like an improvised meditations on falling-scale sequences. A contrapuntal carillon opens the last movement, which evolves into a bubbly rondo rife with warm recollections.

The E-flat Sonata was the first chamber work of Brahms I ever heard on record; and perhaps someday an enterprising soul will reissue the Benny Goodman/Nadia Reisenberg collaboration from CBS 78s that so moved me. The first movement is marked Allegro amabile, and certainly Campbell and Renzi perform with warm geniality of spirit. Lovely, singing lines, a strong, flexible vocal line in all parts mark this charming rendition. The ensuing Allegro appassionato achieves something of the organ's sonority in terms of color and mixed timbres. For his final effort in chamber music expression Brahms ends with a thoughtful theme and (six) variations, and the pregnant pauses between Campbell and Renzi speak as eloquently as their harmonized dialogues. For ambiance, intimacy, and audiophile presence in your Brahms library, you need only acquire this fine disc.