



J. Brahms: Clarinet Chamber Music

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American Record Guide (Paul L. Althouse - 2007.05.01)

After completing his second string quintet in 1890, Brahms declared his intention to retire at age 57. We are glad he changed his mind, and before his death in 1896 he wrote several memorable pieces: 20 short piano works and four chamber pieces for clarinet, three of them included here.

This is quite wonderful. Campbell, a Canadian native who studied with Robert Marcellus, is a terrific player with excellent breath control and pure, non-wheezy tone. He sounds good at all dynamic levels and uses no vibrato (unlike, for example, Stoltzman in the slow movements of the sonatas). Campbell has surrounded himself with talented colleagues. I was particularly impressed with some deft playing by pianist Jean-Pascal Meyer in the trio, but in truth all the players deserve high praise for bringing these late, autumnal works to life so beautifully.

As our Overview (S/O 2006) pointed out, there are several fine recordings of Brahms's clarinet pieces, but this one is certainly worthy of inclusion.