



Press Info:

JOHANNES BRAHMS
String Quartet in A minor, Op. 51, No. 2

FELIX OTTO DESSOFF
String Quartet in F major, Op. 7

Mandelring Quartett
Sebastian Schmidt, violin
Nanette Schmidt, violin
Michael Scheitzbach, viola
Bernhard Schmidt, violoncello

“Thank you very much indeed for the Quartet which is now smiling at me in such a friendly manner, like the first time.”
(Brahms to Dessooff)

Felix Otto Dessooff (1835-1892) was already active as a chapel-master at the age of 19 and could look already back over a remarkable career when he was appointed to the Court Opera in Vienna in 1860. This is where the paths of Dessooff and Brahms crossed for the first time, especially since the conductor Dessooff was strongly committed to Brahms's works. Their mutual recognition and appreciation found expression in the premiere of Brahms's First Symphony in Karlsruhe, for example, with which Brahms entrusted Dessooff. The dedication of the present String Quartet of Dessooff to Brahms also reveals the bond between the two composers.

Dessooff composed intensively during his period in Karlsruhe. Like Brahms, he had doubts about the value of his compositions. He therefore sent his F-major String Quartet to Brahms for the latter's appraisal, only publishing it after he was sure of Brahms's approval. The Quartet contains rhythmic, harmonic and performing idiosyncrasies reminiscent of Brahms in places; it is full of wit and playful joy, convincing the listener through its original, direct charm. Brahms, on the other hand – the classicist and academician – does not exclusively reveal himself as the preserver of the string quartet tradition in the work recorded here, but also as an innovator of musical language. Through the formation of motifs, the logic and economy of phrases and the sometimes hidden beauty of details, Brahms understands how to do justice to the demanding genre of chamber music and, moreover, to set new standards for the genre of the string quartet.

The present CD follows as the third part of the series “Brahms and His Contemporaries.” With its interpretation, the Mandelring Quartet lends a thrillingly musical power of conviction to both string quartets.

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