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Titel:
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Early Piano Works Vol. 2
Sonatas op. 1 + 5

Musician:
Hardy Rittner,
Ignaz Bösendorfer piano 1849/1850

1 SACD

Order No.:
MDG 904 1538-6

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Bravura Debut

With his first Brahms volume Hardy Rittner made the music world sit up and listen and met with positive international resonance. "I have never heard these works on a fortepiano – and I have never heard them so intensively" (musicweb). Now the highly gifted young pianist is presenting his second recording – once again on a previously undocumented, magnificently restored Bösendorfer grand piano from 1849-50 made available to him by the Viennese collector Gert Hecher.

Grand Piano

Brahms once wrote in a letter, "I do not like to set a program without having gotten to know the hall and, mainly, the grand piano." It is also just as certain that he thought very highly of the 235-centimeter grand piano by the Viennese piano builder Ignaz Bösendorfer produced two years before. The use of grand pianos lending tonal support to the particular keyboard repertoire thus makes perfect sense in the context of nineteenth-century music.

Symmetrical Structure

Brahms had written, rejected, and systematically destroyed countless songs, piano compositions, and string quartets before he presented himself to the public with his op. 1. He very deliberately established contacts with Beethoven: in one passage an allusion to the Hammerklavier Sonata is audible; in another connections to the Waldstein Sonata can be recognized. In his Sonata in F minor op. 5 Brahms developed the five-movement symmetrical sonata

form that Béla Bartók would later appropriate for himself and his bridge form. Just prior to the conclusion the motto F-A-E (Frei Aber Einsam, Free But Lonely) that would continue to be of importance to Brahms throughout his life is heard for the first time. And reminiscences of the Deutschlandlied may be intended as a signal of his hopes for a united democratic fatherland.

Musical Masterpiece

On this recording Hardy Rittner demonstrates that he already belongs "to the world top class of pianists" (Frankfurter Rundschau). His seemingly effortless mastery of the difficulties of playing technique posed by the Viennese action, together with his extraordinarily fine sense of sound and unbridled performance pleasure, is stunning. And the reactions in the music press have been just as enthusiastic: "A masterpiece" (Klassik.com); "A most promising start to Rittner's complete cycle" (International Piano); "Draws powerful, dramatic yet eloquent musical sounds ... highly recommended" (sa-cd.net); "Multi-prizewinning ... excellent SACD recording" (musicweb).

Johannes Brahms

Early Piano Works Vol. 1
Sonata No. 2 op. 2; Variations op. 9, Ballades op. 10
MDG 604 1494-2 (CD)
MDG 904 1494-6 (Hybrid-SACD)

