

Johannes Brahms - Cello Sonatas (1990)

Written by bluesever

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Cello Sonata No.1 in E minor Op.38 Sonate für Violoncello Nr. 1 e-moll Sonate pour violoncelle no. 1 en mi mineur [1] I: *Allegro non troppo* 12.28 [2] II: *Allegretto quasi menuetto & Trio* 5.56 [3] III: *Allegro - Più presto* 6.56

Cello Sonata No.2 in F Op.99 Sonate für Violoncello Nr. 2 F-dur Sonate pour violoncelle no. 2 en fa majeur

[4] I: *Allegro vivace* 9.03 [5] II: *Adagio affettuoso* 7.32 [6] III: *Allegro passionato* 7.40 [7] IV: *Allegro molto - Più presto* 4.43

Mstislav Rostropovich - Violoncello/violoncelle Rudolf Serkin - piano/Klavier

The balance is not quite right, with the cello too prominent, but once I got used to that the performances started to take me over. Here we have two of the greatest classical interpreters of their time taking us into the special world of Brahms, and they had me thinking about the composer in a way I have not done in years. Most books and articles I have read about him have a lot to say about Beethoven, but I really doubt whether Brahms's music would have been much different if Beethoven had never lived. Both consciously and by instinct, Brahms was the guardian of the great German musical tradition embodied above all in Bach -- a tradition where pure 'absolute' music expressed itself through an intellectual apparatus of polyphonic and structural devices. Since Bach's time Haydn and Mozart had perfected for instrumental music a compositional system usually called the 'sonata' style. Beethoven had naturally picked this up, but what he forced on to it was a special dimension of highly personalised expression, and it is precisely this way of treating it that Brahms turned his back on. With him we are back, in his own deeply original way, to music using the composer to express itself.

When a pianist of very special and unusual gifts is aged 80 or so and has retained his technique and evenness of touch, when he has spent a lifetime developing an austere and uncompromising vision of the instrumental music that we normally think of as being the 'greatest', when he studies completely afresh the works he is to perform with the greatest cellist of the next generation, there is a good chance we are going to get something very special, and I

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do not believe I am imagining it. This is a totally unique artistic combination offering a very special -- not eccentric in any way but still very special -- insight into a composer that many of us know by heart without really getting our minds round the phenomenon he represents. This record is a milestone in my musical pilgrimage and maybe it will be in yours. ---David Bryson, amazon.com

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