



Johannes Brahms: Complete String Sextets

aud 97.715

EAN: 4022143977151



[American Record Guide](#) (Paul L Althouse - 2017.09.01)

source: <http://argsubsonline.com/subscribers/ARG...>



Two recordings of the Sextets, both very good and at the same time very different. The most obvious clue comes from the timings. The scherzos are at effectively the same tempo, but everywhere else the Mandelring is noticeably quicker. I've noted in their previous recordings (Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms) that they always seem to be at the faster end of the tempo spectrum, so their playing seems consistently youthful and unsentimental. They do prefer the "long line" rather than a style that reveals lots of inner detail; but it would be a mistake to call their playing cold, mechanical or inexpressive. Everything's there, just in slightly compressed form. They also have an advantage as an established quartet, so four of the players have (we hope!) similar interpretive tastes. A fifth player (Glassl) was a former member of the quartet, so he speaks the same language. I don't know what to say about the sixth player, a cellist named Schmidt, because three members of the quartet are already named Schmidt, and this makes four! I have been unable to find out if they're all related, but the playing is very polished and unified in spirit.

The players in the Capucon group, according to the notes, met each other through various performances in Vienna, Paris, and Salzburg. They came together at the 2016 Easter Festival in Aix-en-Provence for these performances, which were recorded in concert. Here tempos seem more normal in that the music flows easily, while with the Mandelring a tempo sometimes seems imposed on the music. The gentler tempo pleased me in the movements I particularly love (1:1), though the Mandelring didn't seem too fast when I flipped back to them.

A word about the sonics. Audite's sound is very rich and full, which is fine, but the instruments often seem glaringly close. Erato's recording is more distant, but sounds nasal next to Audite's; in time, though, the ear adjusts, and it sounds good. Better than either, though, is the much more neutral perspective that Hyperion gave the Raphael Ensemble nearly 30 years ago. If you're looking for something up to date, either of the review recordings would be fine, but if choosing one, I would pick the Mandelring.

BRAHMS: Sextets
Roland Glassl, va; Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt, vc; Mandelring Quartet
Audite 97.715 (SACD) 72 minutes

Renaud Capucon, Christoph Koncz, v; Gerard Caussé, Marie Chellemme, va; Gautier Capucon, Clemens Hagen, vc
Erato 58883—77 minutes

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