

Mp3 Avery Ensemble - Mahler, Schnittke, Brahms - Piano Quartets

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Chamber music at its finest, including Gustav Mahler's first and only completed piano quartet movement written in a style heavily influenced by the romantic masters such as Brahms. 6 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Chamber Music, CLASSICAL: Brahms Show all album songs: Mahler, Schnittke, Brahms - Piano Quartets Songs Details: ENSEMBLE BIO: Unique among American chamber ensembles, the Avery Ensemble performs a breadth of styles spanning the history of Western instrumental music. For them the art music of the seventeenth century and that of the twenty-first belongs to one and the very same musical tradition Purcell and Mozart become not merely ancestors to Brahms and Schnittke, but siblings. The ensembles remarkable chemistry is revealed in performances that extract the utmost meaning from each work in its diverse repertoire. Unrivaled virtuosity, depth of understanding and passion distinguish their presentations of the standard chamber music repertoire, seventeenth-century music and post-modern masterpieces. NOTES: Piano Quartet (1876) Gustav Mahler (1860 - 1911) It is unfortunate for us that Gustav Mahler turned away from composing chamber music while still a young man. Even the expanded symphony orchestra was hard-pressed to realize the dynamic range and variety of colors that his imagination required. The same year that Brahms last piano quartet was published Mahler entered the Vienna Conservatory. And there he did compose chamber music that he performed with his colleagues. Not all of these unpublished works were committed to paper (the piano part to his violin sonata existed only in his head). In his biography of the composer, Donald Mitchell makes a compelling case that the A-minor piano quartet movement recorded on this disc is the work that won the sixteen-year old Mahler a prize during his first year at the conservatory. Notwithstanding its weaknesses in formal organization, the movement possesses a brooding affect that is engaging and darkly attractive. The composer lamentably did not choose to complete the other movements. All that exists of the rest of the work is the twenty-four-measure fragment ... Piano Quartet (1988) Alfred Schnittke (1934 - 1998) Alfred Schnittke often perpetrates no small violence against chronology by subjecting older music or musical styles to processes of distortion and deconstruction that he observed in Mahlers Symphonies (consider the funeral

march on the childrens round Frre Jacques from Symphony no. 1). In his Piano Quartet Schnittke exploits bare anachronism for its inherent tension. He appropriates Mahlers piano quartet Scherzo fragment in G minor whose melody is heard seventeen times during the piece. A fascinating orchestration of this work can be heard as the second movement of Schnittkes Concerto Grosso no. 4/Symphony no. 5 (1988). Schnittke places Mahlers melody in opposition to a musical entity that attempts to break down and assimilate it, perhaps to devour and digest it. Schnittkes signature spiral cello four-note circular motif, i.e. E flat, D, C, C sharp is ubiquitous to the material constituting this entity. In his Penitential Psalms, the composer makes a point of repeatedly using this motive to set the word ee (eternal, everlasting, endless, perpetual). Schnittkes concerns with temporality, eternity, mortality and achronism invade his instrumental music through musical signs, allusions and pictorial gestures such as this circular motif. Mahlers original accompaniment, heard most clearly at the beginning and in the final episode, also has a beginningless quality; it is circular and even traces a pictorial allusion to the infinity sign [] in its repetition. Schnittke creates a representation of an aberrational encounter between two incompatible dimensions. One might choose to read them as time verses eternity or simply as the individual verses a cruel society; in the score there is justification for both. The narrative, and particularly the denouement, can be kaleidoscopically changed from one listening to another as the listener considers different roles for the works cast of characters. Mahlers melody [diatonicism, the individual, time, history?] takes on the musical persona of a protagonist in a struggle that plays out in the four episodes that form the work. The first episode is governed by strict inversional complementation; three different lines, including the first statement of Mahlers melody (prominent in the cello) are reflected in perfect symmetry as though by multiple mirrors. The multiple images of the same objects add to the ghostly quality of the work as a whole. As soon as the melody ends we lose our basis to discern reality from reflection. The multiplication of eternal motifs here reminds us of the infinite series of images occurring when a mirror reflects another mirror. In episode one the opposition between the melody and its adversary [chromaticism, social collectivity, eternity?] breaks down in impasse. After a rest, episode two presents the melody in four-part canon led first by the viola. Each voice enters a semitone lower and an eighth note later than the previous in a stretto that obfuscates the melody with a decaying trail in time and pitch. The piano meanwhile continues its accompaniment mirrored in strict inversional complementation. A second statement of the melody is interrupted by music in looser stretto leading to a chain of linked circular motifs that bring the episode to rest. In the third and

longest episode the intensity of the works dramatic conflict increases and is finally decided. The melody is played once by the cello, once as a three-voice canon and once by the piano, hidden as the boundary pitch in registrally displaced chromatic clusters. Two new themes appear and contend with each other, the first of which recalls the Elegy theme from Richard Strauss Eine Alpensinfonie Op. 64 by sharing with that theme an identical pitch-class set for its first six notes. This theme, beginning with GGF sharpGA flatGDF, is introduced by the piano. It is entirely possible that Strauss theme was an Elegy for none other than Mahler, whose death reawakened Strauss interest in what would be his last and, perhaps, greatest major symphonic work. By making this reference, Schnittke is drawing into his piano quartet ... Hans Twitchell, 2007 Piano Quartet No 1 in G minor, Op 25 Johannes Brahms (1833-1896) Brahms was one of the most rigorously self-critical of composers. Since he claimed to have written and destroyed some twenty string quartets before producing one which met his exacting standards, it would not be surprising if he showed similar caution in others genres. The two piano quartets Opp. 25 and 26 are, in fact, the earliest of his chamber works with piano which he published in their original form. Once he had successfully completed a work in a new medium, Brahms often wrote a second, in a contrasting expressive style, soon afterwards. This was the case with the orchestral serenades, the symphonies, the string quartets and sextets, as well as the piano quartets. The First Piano Quartet was completed in 1861, and he began work on No 2 the same year. In contrast to the more lyrical Second, No 1 is, at least in the first three movements, a powerfully serious work that often seems to be reaching out ... Mike Wheeler, 2007

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