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PACM 091

The Busch Quartet

Brahms String Quartets, Piano Quartet No. 1

Pristine
XR

It was wise to choose the more immediately attractive of the two string quartets that make up Brahms' Op. 51 and I earnestly hope that the record-buying public will support this laudable enterprise. The composer never returned to the medium of the string quartet, preferring the piano quartet, which he evidently found more congenial. The first movement, full of energy and drive, is a little too rich in texture in spite of a lovely *lusingando* second subject: and the second movement is, its dramatic middle section apart, of a very romantic cast. The gem of the quartet is the very original Minuet movement which has a lively scherzo in place of a trio, and this movement contains music of the greatest beauty. The final movement gives the lie to Wolf, who said Brahms could not exult, and nothing in the quartet is lovelier than the sudden ironing out of the syncopations of its chief subject, in the coda, and the presentation of the theme in the simplest possible terms just before a most exciting conclusion is added. The Busch Quartet are at the top of their form in this recording and bring out all the lyrical beauty of the work as well as the brilliance of the livelier movements. The recording is exceedingly good.

A.R., The Gramophone *Review of String Quartet No. 2, November 1947*

Let me say at once: this is a wonderful performance indeed ... The heights—and the highest heights—are reached in a magnificent reading of the slow movement. The intensity of feeling in the opening section is a quality characteristic of the Busch players (and notably, of course, of their leader): equally noteworthy is the playing in the contrasting C major section that follows. Indeed, the performance of this whole movement makes it quite clear that we are listening to artists of the very highest calibre.

And having arrived at this form they proceed to a performance of Brahms' wonderful *Finale*, which is by turns scintillating and wonderfully alluring. How well, for one thing, those changes of time and rhythm are judged. The balance of the instruments in the recording is excellent throughout, the ensemble is impeccable, while the quality of recorded sound is very good (though, like the playing, it seemed to me to improve from good to excellent as it went along). This is a magnificent set of records.

T.H., The Gramophone *Review of Piano Quartet No. 1, September 1949, excerpt*

Producer's Note

These recordings provide us with a wonderful sweep of time both in terms of chamber music performance in the era of commercial sound recording, and in terms of recording quality. Thanks in part to the efforts of the National Gramophonic Society, by 1932 the major record companies were taking chamber music seriously and the Busch Quartet were among the vanguard of a handful of new, highly professional, technically brilliant groups able to profit from this. By the time they returned to the Brahms Quartets another revolution was in the air, and we hear clearly the quality leap from the 78rpm disc recordings of the 2nd Quartet to the taped recordings of the 3rd and the Piano Quartet. All the recordings have benefitted enormously from both pitch correction and/or stabilisation and XR remastering in these new transfers. **Andrew Rose**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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The BUSCH QUARTET

plays Brahms



String Quartets Nos. 1-3
Piano Quartet No. 1
Rudolf Serkin, piano

EMI Studio recordings, 1932-49

THE BUSCH QUARTET *plays Brahms*

Disc One

1. String Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Op. 51, No. 1

- 1 1st mvt. - *Allegro* (7:20)
- 2 2nd mvt. - *Romanze - Poco Adagio* (8:22)
- 3 3rd mvt. - *Allegretto molto moderato e comodo* (9:49)
- 4 4th mvt. - *Allegro* (5:49)

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

- 5 1st mvt. - *Allegro non troppo* (7:36)
- 6 2nd mvt. - *Andante moderato* (9:58)
- 7 3rd mvt. - *Quasi Minuetto, moderato* (5:12)
- 8 4th mvt. - *Finale. Allegro non assai* (6:00)

Disc Two

3. String Quartet No. 3 in B flat major, Op. 57

- 1 1st mvt. - *Vivace* (7:04)
- 2 2nd mvt. - *Andante* (7:42)
- 3 3rd mvt. - *Agitato (Allegretto non troppo)* (7:43)
- 4 4th mvt. - *Poco Allegretto con Variazioni* (10:55)

4. Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25

- 5 1st mvt. - *Allegro* (12:56)
- 6 2nd mvt. - *Intermezzo: Allegro ma non troppo - Trio: Animato* (8:52)
- 7 3rd mvt. - *Andante con moto* (10:02)
- 8 4th mvt. - *Rondo alla Zingarese: Presto* (8:17)

Rudolf Serkin, piano

Adolf Busch *violin*

Gösta Andreasson(1)/Ernest Drucker(2)/Bruno Straumann(3) *violin*

Karl Doktor(1)/Hugo Gottesmann(2-4) *viola*

Hermann Busch *cello*

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of
The Busch Quartet, c.1930

String Quartet No. 1
Recorded 19 & 23 September, 1932
Issued as HMV DB 1807-10
Matrix Nos. 2B.3858-65
String Quartet No. 2
Recorded 19 April, 1947
Issued as Columbia LX.1022-25
Matrix Nos. CAX.9871-78
String Quartet No. 3
Recorded 17 & 21 May, 1949
Issued as Columbia LX.1262-5 & LXS.1266
Matrix Nos. CAX.10511-19
Piano Quartet No. 1
Recorded 25 & 26 May, 1949
Issued as Columbia LX.1217-21
Matrix Nos. CAX.10520-29

Recorded at Abbey Road, Studio 3

Total duration: 2hr 13:36

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