

Brahms: Violin Sonatas no.1 in G major op.78, no 2 in A op.100 & no.3 in D minor op.108

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Description: Proof that individuality can have its place in Brahms interpretation

Musicians: Ida Bieler (violin) James Maddox (piano)

Composer: Brahms

Of the works that I regularly review, few receive such a divergence of interpretation as the three Brahms violin sonatas. This new release from the American-born violinist Ida Bieler falls into the category I would describe as 'highly personal'. Other recordings are littered with oddities, and Bieler is certainly not alone when she slows towards the end of the second movement of the op.78 when the composer indicates a slight quickening. But if one puts aside such concerns as her unmarked accelerandos as dynamics increase, and a predilection to slow when approaching tempo changes, there is still much to enjoy in Bieler's smooth and elegant playing. She avoids an overly robust approach to the short passages of double-stopping in the opening movement of op.100, and I particularly like her unhurried charm in the following *Andante tranquillo* where the music is affectionately handled. Then we arrive at the Third, where there is a shift in recorded balance to give Bieler a greater presence, and the disc takes on a new lease of life. Passion abounds, tempos move up a gear, and there is a heightened level of intensity.

James Maddox provides a powerful contribution throughout, though the microphone placement seemingly adds to a pronounced left-hand weight. Such balance reservations aside, the sound is generally pleasing.

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