

# Mp3 Roberto Plano - Honens Laureate Series: Brahms

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The piano music of Brahms is known for its emotional complexity: it seems to hit upon every nuance of what it means to be human. 11 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Brahms, CLASSICAL: Piano solo Details: about the artist Italian Roberto Plano is Laureate of the 2003 Honens International Piano Competition, and a finalist of the 12th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2005. He appeared in Alice Tully Hall in New York, where he gave the premiere of Luis de Pablos Retratos y transcripciones, and performs regularly in Europe. He has appeared with orchestras in Canada, the Czech Republic, Japan, Spain and the U.S., as well as his homeland. He has recorded two other CDs, for the Sipario Dischi and Azica labels. Mr. Plano received his Diplôme supérieur d'enseignement, à l'unanimité et avec félicitations du jury, an International Certificate for Piano Artists, and his Diplôme supérieur de concertiste, à l'unanimité et avec félicitations du jury from l'école Normale Cortot, where he worked with Nelson Delle Vigne. Prior to his Honens victory, Roberto Plano had won the 2001 Cleveland International Piano Competition, and was a prizewinner at the 2001 Sendai Competition (Japan), the 2000 Iturbi Competition (Spain) and was a finalist at the 2003 Busoni Competition. Honens is Canada's leading presenter of music for piano. Founded in 1991, Honens International Piano Competition is one of the most prestigious music competitions in the world and Canada's leading event of its kind. The competition's unique Artistic and Career Development Program offers its laureates concert engagements, publicity and promotion, individual career guidance, musical coaching, and opportunities for further study. The latter's key feature is a residency at The Banff Centre, where the laureates also make their recordings.

liner notes Most of the piano music of Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was composed at either end of his compositional career, and the two works on this recording each represent one of the extremes. His F minor Sonata, his third such work, is only his fifth opus and dates from Brahms' 21st year, while the six pieces that make up the Op. 118 set were part of the master's twilight years, when he returned to solo piano works, publishing them in sets, one after another. It is well to notice that of his early piano output, three of the first five opus numbers are sonatas. In his later years, his piano pieces had names which were more mercurial, more dare one say it of the great traditionalist? modern. They were called ballades, intermezzi, capriccios and

rhapsodies. The very structures of these late pieces had even the iconic Arnold Schoenberg label Brahms the Progressive. By the time his early works were published, Brahms was already ensconced with the Schumanns, and it was Brahms' mentor Robert Schumann who had truly freed music from such classical restraints as form. As if all mental pictures must be shaped to fit one or two forms! Schumann had railed. As if each work of art had not its own meaning and consequently its own form! The wide-eyed young Brahms took this to heart even in the early blossoming of his creative art. His Opus 4 is a single-movement Scherzo for piano. The six pieces which make up the Klavierstücke (Piano Pieces), Op. 118 include four intermezzi, a ballade (No. 3) and a romanze (No. 5). They were part of a fruitful summer in 1893 in which Brahms composed much solo piano music, eventually distributing them among several opus numbers for publication. This is not to say that Brahms did this or anything arbitrarily or without consideration. All but the first of the six pieces of Op. 118 may all conform to a common A-B-A format, but there is more to link them than that. The opening Intermezzo is the briefest of the pieces, an Allegro non assai that sets the table, leading to the tender Second Intermezzo. The B section of this A Major piece is further split into its own A-B-A section, the outer parts of which are dominated by a canon figure in F-sharp Major. The outer sections have a liquid, inexorable movement to them. The Ballade of the set (Brahms had considered the word Rhapsodie for this movement) is in G minor, a rousing Allegro energico that seems to careen from march-like to almost dancing, though its middle section is more serene. The next Intermezzo is in F minor and begins as a troubled eddy. Another canon figures into the B section here as well. Counterpoint in fact abounds in much of Brahms' late piano music. The Romanze is touched with melancholy, though elegantly given out. There is a sense of what some have called wanderlust in the D Major middle, though it could also come across as a remembered time of happiness intruding on the resignation of the main material. The last Intermezzo of the set is another Andante, but this one tinged with an almost tragic feel. From the incisiveness with which the set began, we have traveled far to reach this, almost funereal ending. It is thought by some that the recent death of Brahms' close friend Elizabeth von Herzogenberg coloured this work, which tries only briefly to lift itself from its air of loss and farewell. The F minor Sonata was composed in two different periods. Brahms composed the second and fourth movements in March, 1853, and added the other three that October, all the while using Robert and Clara Schumann as sounding boards during the work's progress. The thundering chords of the opening form the material for the entire first movement. They give way to colourful splashes and quiet

pools, each tightly linked to each other. So while there is contrast in mood and pacing, the repeated gestures lend a sense of momentum and direction in this large movement. Its ending is dramatically stretched out, providing a grand stage for the Andante. In a wholeheartedly romantic gesture, Brahms included a verse by poet C.O. Sternau at the head of the score of the Andante espressivo: Der Abend dmmert, das Mondlicht scheint, Da sind zwei Herzen in Liebe vereint Und halten sich selig umfangen. Evening grows dark, the moonlight shines, Two hearts are united in love And enclose themselves in bliss. There is certainly the gentle moonlight in the opening measures, which continues to unfold in repeated notes coloured by haunting, wide right-hand chords. Ever so gradually, the mood changes to one of quiet determination, reaching an impassioned yet still profoundly tender climax; strong left hand figures while the top notes in the right reach the bliss of Sternaus verse. And just as it seems that the movement will end on a whisper, a few, confident arpeggiated chords lead to the close. The next two movements are both much shorter, beginning with a Scherzo which stands in stark contrast to the movements that flank it. It is a frantic dance, a frenzy of energy and broken chords, with an unsettled, though gentler trio section. Presaging future works, perhaps, Brahms labeled the next movement Intermezzo, casting what sounds very much like a funeral march in B-flat minor, which maintains its solemn procession through its entirety. Unconventional though the five-movement form is, Brahms caps his last piano sonata with a towering rondo, though one in which the recurring motif is not necessarily the one which dominates. It begins almost uncertainly, though the first contrasting subject (a salute to Brahms friend Joseph Joachim and his noted F-A-E signature, frei aber einsam, or free, but lonely) ushers in sharper focus and direction. A sense of summation begins with a second contrasting subject in D-flat, and musical ideas from earlier in the sonata are gathered, while the subject of the rondo proper is now heard almost in accompaniment, becoming a clipped version of itself. Unsettled rhythmic ideas create another sense of drama, and the work concludes in the tonic major from whence it began not in unquestioned victory, but at the very least in confidence and bravura, bringing an end to the beginning of Brahms creative output. Program Notes

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