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CLASSICS

Anna Tsybuleva

BRAHMS

Ruth Reinhardt *conductor*
Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin



JOHANNES BRAHMS

(1833-1897)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 83

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | I. Allegro non troppo | [17.53] |
| 2 | II. Allegro appassionato | [8.59] |
| 3 | III. Andante – più adagio * | [11.49] |
| 4 | IV. Allegretto grazioso – Un poco più presto | [9.36] |

* Valentin Radutiu *cello soloist*

- | | | |
|---|---|--------|
| 5 | Capriccio in F sharp minor, Op. 76 No. 1 | [3.24] |
| 6 | Intermezzo in E flat major, Op. 117 No. 1 | [6.17] |
| 7 | Capriccio in B minor, Op. 76 No. 2 | [3.28] |
| 8 | Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 No. 2 | [6.33] |
| 9 | Capriccio in C major, Op. 76 No. 8 | [3.37] |

Total timings: [71.42]

ANNA TSYBULEVA PIANO

DEUTSCHES SYMPHONIE-ORCHESTER BERLIN

RUTH REINHARDT CONDUCTOR

www.signumrecords.com

FOREWORD

Summer 2015. I play a lot of Brahms, read about his life, his letters, the creation of his works. I live and talk with him through his music, seeing his personality in phrasing and harmonies. He shares the most genius and personal thoughts and philosophical ideas. I search and find answers in his scores... I live with his music in my soul, I hear it in my head whilst on the train, in the park, or having a cup of coffee with croissant in a cafe on the street.

And suddenly, I read that Brahms has died.

"What? Wait! It cannot be! I played his Concerto this morning, he was fine, he was in his prime!"

This thought struck me! In that moment I felt the incredible fantastic power of music on me. It connected us through the ages, through space. It was real magic...

It was then that I had a brave idea to make a recording of the Second Piano Concerto and some solo pieces, in the hope of capturing this magic and sharing it with other people somehow.

January 2020. The dream came true: a recording of my beloved Brahms with the DSO Berlin and Ruth Reinhardt. The entire process was fantastic! Ruth and I were entirely of one mind in our approach to Brahms's music. When we started to rehearse, it was as if we had been playing together our whole lives.... We almost didn't need to talk – we just played.

It was also a blessing to have our expert producer/sound engineer, Christoph Martin Frommen. He not only created a wonderful atmosphere, he read my thoughts throughout the process. This recording would not be so special without him.

Summer 2020. Pandemic. The world is depressed and unmotivated. I play a lot of Brahms, I read about him, and I listen to the edits of our recording whilst walking in the mountains in my homeland during lockdown. Day by day, step by step, I begin to feel better. I thank Brahms for his acceptance and consolation, for his faith in the world, people, and the future, and for the strength of his spirit and love expressed through music.

This recording would not have been possible without the generous support, organisation, and work of the following people: Adam Gatehouse and the Leeds International Piano Competition; Notenstein La Roche Privat Bank; Vontobel Bank; the kind people at Yamaha Europe and their beautiful piano; my wonderful managers, Stephen Wright and Alexandra Knight (Knight Classical); and of course the amazing Steve Long and his team (Signum Classics).

Most of all, I give thanks to Brahms – and hope that through this recording his music can touch your life as it has mine.

Yours, Anna

Piano Concerto No. 2

For many, Brahms's Second is the grandest and most satisfying of all piano concertos, uniting classical discipline and romantic freedom to an unprecedented degree. Yet the initial response to a concerto of seemingly limitless demands both technical and musical, or perhaps I should say physical and spiritual, was more baffled than enthusiastic. As in Brahms's First Concerto the soloist was confronted with outlandish

difficulties yet remained essentially *primus inter pares* – a form of chamber music though on a massive scale. Why was the pianist not more obviously prominent in the style of previous Romantic piano concertos, in the chandelier glitter of Hummel, Thalberg and Henselt, quite apart from Chopin and Liszt? Composers in particular listened askance. Debussy's characteristic sarcasm – the product of a deep-rooted insecurity – knew no bounds, thus "let's leave, he's about to start the development", while for Poulenc, more tersely, "too long, too heavy." Liszt attended the first performance, with Brahms as the soloist, and blending praise with caution found the Concerto "a little grey in tone, though with thought and feeling moving in noble harmony." Clearly he sensed how the public would hardly warm to music that seemed opaque and the reverse of a more obvious virtuosity. And that is leaving aside the vitriolic Tchaikovsky ("Brahms, what a giftless bastard") or the condescending Lalo ("he's not a grown-up composer. We would say to him, 'you have some talent, but go back as soon as possible to the class room'.") Tchaikovsky's savagery in particular finds its literary equivalent in D. H. Lawrence on Jane Austen ("that narrow-gutted spinster"). Today such comments, while woefully wide of the mark, seem both comprehensible

and inevitable; a price paid by all musical innovators and pioneers.

Then there was the question of the solo part. Brahms was not without a sardonic sense of humour. He had heard an inadequate performance of his First Concerto by a lady pianist and vowed to write one that no lady could play "a tiny, tiny piano concerto, with a tiny wisp

of a scherzo." His joke was not without irony and he would have been surprised at the range of lady pianists who have responded to his misanthropy, his throwing down the gauntlet. Brahms's Second is in the repertoires of several women pianists of the past; Myra Hess, Clara Haskil, Annie Fisher and Alicia de Larrocha (briefly and reluctantly) and today Anna Tsybuleva joins those who scorn Brahms's intimidation. Not for them a surplus of



Christoph Martin Frommen, Anna Tsybuleva and Ruth Reinhardt

testosterone or a sense of writing that is never comfortable, that never lies easily under the hand.

Nor is there a grateful gratifying of a more traditional and transcendental virtuosity. Brahms is transcendental in a radically different, more inclusive and profound sense. Such writing is worlds apart from say, the once celebrated French *jeu perlé*, playing exclusively on the surface, the fingers uncomplemented by arms and shoulders and, indeed, with full body weight. Mere facility could hardly be more alien than in Brahms. Not surprisingly the French took issue with what they saw as misplaced grandeur, though regarding an older generation of pianists the Concerto was, enterprisingly for the times, in the repertoire of Robert Casadesus. On the other hand Brahms's Second has been prominent in the programmes of the greatest Russian pianists, in a work where their training towards an all-encompassing command shows to the greatest advantage. Central to the repertoires of Richter and Gilels, it was also performed and recorded by Horowitz, albeit under duress, under the insistence of Toscanini, his formidable father-in-law. He also admitted to a dislike of Brahms – of music that failed to reflect his own distinctive edge and wizardry.

The first movement *Allegro non troppo* opens with a horn call and a promise of epic things to follow. Yet the pianist's gentle and caressing reply and the following brief tutti hardly prepare us for the pianist's massive cadenza, when he unleashes writing of a daunting opulence. Again, nothing is comfortable – there are absolutely no concessions. Not surprisingly as the Concerto gained in awe and appreciation even the most academic of writers felt moved to poetic analogy. For Donald Tovey there is that moment in the first movement when you seem to hear “the beating of mighty wings.”

Brahms may have mischievously referred to his second movement, *Allegro appassionato*, as a *scherzo*, but if *scherzo* means a joke then this is no joke. The piano's fierce upward thrust opening sets the tone. There is an octave- and double-note passage to test the technique of even the most formidably equipped pianist and the movement ends in a mood of fist-shaking defiance.

The *Andante* acquires a second soloist; the cellist's introduction of a surpassing and elegiac beauty before the pianist replies with a slow and mesmeric upward spiral of sound. This is later complemented, after rhetorical storms, with an oasis of calm, of widely spaced figuration

leaving an unforgettable feeling of vast and starry spaces.

The concluding Rondo, *Allegretto grazioso*, offers yet another surprise, an alternation of dancing lightness and the more familiar heft and grandeur of the first two movements. For Tovey it was “that great and child-like finale;” one that ends in a blaze of glory. Only Busoni's five movement Piano Concerto exceeds Brahms's Second in length, but even so the sense of scope and scale is less. Brahms's Second Concerto, an ultimate masterpiece of lyrical grandeur, remains unique in the musical Parthenon. One that, in Michael Tippett's words, requires “that great effort of interpretation.”

Five pieces for solo piano

There are no more recondite or romantically introspective works in piano literature than the sequence of Capricci and Intermezzi composed by Brahms in his old age, a both radiant and troubled reflection of time's past and of a life-times experience. Opus 116-119 were published between 1892-3, but the earlier set of opus 76, published in 1897, belong very much in a related idiom and category. Here is the same alternation of anguish and rapture. No. 1 in F sharp minor is a short yet epic journey, the opening billowing figure building to a storm in a few bars before the

launching of a theme of that bitter-sweet flavour so central to Brahms's heart and mind in his later years. Dedicated to Clara Schumann, it forms an unforgettable opening to what has been aptly described as “an inexhaustible treasure-trove of masterpieces,” and for Brahms's beloved Clara a profoundly expressive alternative to Liszt, a composer she found too full of “the tinsel and the drum.” She also found this Capriccio exceptionally difficult both technically and musically, conjuring up “a desolate unkempt cemetery.” This is followed by a Capriccio of dancing lightness, a miniature prophecy of the Second Concerto's finale, reminding you once more of Brahms's love of Hungarian gypsy music, its principal idea caught up in an intricate web of syncopation. Finally, No. 8, the Capriccio in C major closes the set in an uplifting mood of optimism, though Brahms would not be Brahms if such joy was not shadowed by an unease resolved in a final emphatic and triumphant close.

The three Intermezzi of opus 117 have been described as “autumnal landscapes of poetry entirely in half-tints and chiaroscuro.” The first, a Berceuse, is prefaced by words from a Scottish lullaby, ‘Belau, my boy, lie still/ It grieves me sore to hear thee weep’ mirrored in a ‘haunting and muffled poetry.’

The Intermezzo in A major, opus 118 No 2, is a work full of Brahms's love of heart – warming thirds and sixths. No less typical is the development of the principle theme, a sudden twist into the minor key, a short hymnal blessing and an elaboration of the theme in partial canon.

Small wonder that Schumann, most perceptive and exuberant of critics (to recall his salute to Chopin, “hats off gentlemen, a genius!”) with his reverence for Brahms and his love for Clara found such music full of “wondrous things,” the piano's seeming limitation transformed into an array of “wailing and jubilant voices.” Small wonder, too, that music which haunts and presses on the imagination should have prompted eloquence and evocation from the poet William Ritter. For him late Brahms was like “the golden lustre of parks in autumn, and the austere black and white of winter walks.”

I first heard Anna Tsybuleva when she played a celebrity recital in Hong Kong. Her programme included C. P. E. Bach and Hindemith's First Viola Sonata, where she was partnered by her husband. The whole occasion was of a rare enterprise and distinction, particularly when heard within the context of a competition featuring rather too

many nondescript pianists. Here and in a later appearance at London's Chopin Society she memorably confirmed her triumph (most notably in Brahms's Second Concerto) at the Leeds Competition. She has already recorded a complete Brahms cycle (opus 116) and it is to be hoped that she will complete the miscellaneous offering on this her first disc for Signum.

Notes by Bryce Morrison

ANNA TSYBULEVA

Described by Gramophone Magazine as embodying “superb pianism and intelligent musicianship”, Anna Tsybuleva shot into the international spotlight in 2015 when she was crowned First Prize Winner of the Leeds International Piano Competition. She received wide critical acclaim for her winning performance, and was described as “A pianist of rare gifts: not since Murray Perahia's triumph in 1972 has Leeds had a winner of this musical poise and calibre” (International Piano Magazine).

Now a regular performer in major cities worldwide, Tsybuleva's early experiences were more modest. Born in 1990, she was raised in Nizhny Arkhyz – a small village of approximately 500 inhabitants

– in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic of Russia, where nature and the beauty of her surroundings proved a constant source of inspiration. These beginnings have served to feed directly into the development of her unique performance style today, which is one of captivating intimacy: drawing the listener into a private sphere of music-making in even the largest of concert halls.

Recent performance highlights have included performances with the Basel Symphony, Mariinsky Orchestra, National Philharmonic Orchestra of Russia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. Alongside this, Tsybuleva has given recitals at such prestigious venues as Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center, Tonhalle Zürich, and the Wigmore Hall, London.

Tsybuleva took her first piano lessons with her mother at the age of 6, before attending the Shostakovich Music School in Volgodonsk aged 9. From age 13, she continued her studies at the Moscow Central Music School and the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatoire, under internationally renowned pedagogue Professor Lyudmila Roschina. During this time, Tsybuleva

garnered her first major competition wins – including the Grand Prix of the International Gilels Piano Competition(2013), and top prizes from the Hamamatsu International Piano Competition (2012) and Takamatsu International Piano Competition (2014).

After graduating from the Moscow Conservatoire in 2014 with the coveted award for ‘Best Student’, Tsybuleva furthered her studies with Claudio Martínez-Mehner at the Hochschule für Musik Basel. During these two years, she developed her growing passion for Romantic repertoire of the German School, and won the Leeds International Piano Competition in 2015 with her captivating performance of Brahms Piano Concerto No.2, under the baton of Sir Mark Elder and the Hallé Orchestra. Tsybuleva has since combined her international performance career with a thirst for further knowledge, and has just completed post-graduate studies at the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatoire.

Tsybuleva's debut recital recording (Fantasien, released on Champs Hill, 2017) comprised piano fantasies by C.P.E. Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms. It garnered universal praise in the media for its imaginative and carefully crafted programme, with reviews including:

“The playing of this magnetic young Russian artist is thoughtful, elegant, and exciting... I have long admired Sviatoslav Richter's take, but this new recording is even more satisfying for its broader approach” (Fanfare Magazine).

With her “energetic elan, bravura, and heart-on-sleeve communication” (International Piano Magazine), Anna Tsybuleva is fast emerging as one of the finest pianists of her generation,

“destined to become a world piano star” (APE Musicale, Italy).

Anna Tsybuleva is a proud member of the ‘Yamaha Artist’ family, and thanks Yamaha for their kindness and support.



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For almost 75 years the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (DSO Berlin) has distinguished itself as one of Germany's leading orchestras. The number of renowned music directors, the scope and variety of its work, and its particular

emphasis on modern and contemporary music, makes the ensemble unique. Founded as the RIAS Symphony Orchestra in 1946, it was renamed the Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin in 1956 and has borne its current name since 1993.

Robin Ticciati has led the DSO as its music director since 2017. In the past three seasons, he has demonstrated his versatility and flexibility with the orchestra with repertoire from the Renaissance to the present day, with presentation forms that range from unusual setups in the hall to staged versions, and with exceptional projects like playing on gut strings and free improvisations. Ticciati is placing the 'Wagner Perspectives' Festival at the centre of the 2020-21 season: on four evenings he will trace lines connecting the great opera composer with France. With its many guest performances, the DSO is present on the national and international music scene. The orchestra has performed in recent

years in Brazil and Argentina, in Japan, China, Malaysia, Abu Dhabi and Eastern Europe, as well as at major festivals such as the Rheingau Musik Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, Salzburg Festival, BBC Proms and the Beethoven Festival Bonn.

The DSO also has a global presence with numerous award-winning CD recordings. In 2011, it received the Grammy Award for the premiere recording for the production of Kaija Saariaho's opera 'L'amour de loin' conducted by Kent Nagano. In recent years, Prokofiev recordings under Tugan Sokhiev that were highly praised by the specialised press have been released by Sony Classical. With works by Bruckner, Debussy, Duparc, Duruflé and

Fauré, Robin Ticciati and the DSO have already presented four highly acclaimed recordings with Linn Records. In autumn 2020, another recording will be released with symphonic poems and songs by Strauss. Since its inception, the DSO has been able to retain outstanding artist personalities. As the first music director, Ferenc Fricsay defined the standards in terms of repertoire, acoustic ideal and media presence. In 1964, the young Lorin Maazel assumed artistic responsibility. In 1982, he was followed by Riccardo Chailly and in 1989 by Vladimir Askenazy. Kent Nagano was appointed music director in 2000. Since his departure in 2006, he has been associated with the orchestra as an honorary conductor. From 2007 to 2010, as the successor to Nagano, Ingo Metzmacher set decisive accents in the concert life of the capital with progressive programmes and consistent commitment to the music of the 20th and 21st centuries. From 2012 to 2016, the Tugan Sokhiev has been music director of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin.

The Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin is an ensemble of the Radio Orchestra and Choirs GmbH (roc berlin). The shareholders are Deutschlandradio, the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Berlin and Radio Berlin-Brandenburg.

RUTH REINHARDT

One of today's most dynamic and nuanced young conductors, Ruth Reinhardt is building an international reputation for her musical intelligence, programmatic imagination, and elegant performances. Born in Saarbrücken, Germany, Reinhardt began studying violin at an early age and sang in the children's chorus of Saarländisches Staatstheater, Saarbrücken's opera company. She attended Zurich's University of the Arts (Zürcher Hochschule der Künste) to study violin with Rudolf Koelman and conducting with Constantin Trinks, with additional training under Johannes Schlaefli. After moving to the United States, Reinhardt received her master's degree in conducting from The Juilliard School, where she studied with Alan Gilbert.

As guest conductor, Reinhardt has appeared with the symphony orchestra of Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Seattle; the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Orchestre national d'Île-de-France, Stockholm Philharmonic, Malmö Symphony, and Tonkünstler Orchestra, among others. Reinhardt was formerly the assistant conductor of the Dallas Symphony (2016-18). Prior to her appointment in Dallas, she was a



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A precocious talent, by age 17 Reinhardt had already composed and conducted an opera, for and performed by the children and youths of her hometown. While studying in Zurich, she conducted the premieres of two chamber operas for children: *Die Kleine Meerjungfrau (The Little Mermaid)* by Swiss composer Michal Muggli, and *Wassilissa* by German composer Dennis Bäsecke. Other opera productions she has conducted include Dvořák's *Rusalka* and Weber's *Der Freischütz* for the North Czech Opera Company, and Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* at the Leipzig University of the Arts.

In November 2020, Reinhardt was named as an ambassador for the state of Saarland in Germany, an initiative established by the Saarland federal government and the SHS Foundation to further the reputation and development of Saarland through cultural and economic advancements.

Dudamel Fellow of the Los Angeles Philharmonic (2017-18), conducting fellow at the Seattle Symphony (2015-16) as well as the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Tanglewood Music Center (2015), and an associate conducting fellow of the Taki Concordia program (2015-17).

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Producer, Recording Engineer & Editor – Christoph Martin Frommen

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