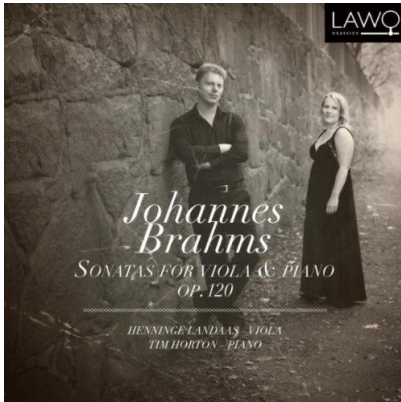


FANFARE

BRAHMS Viola Sonatas, op. 120/1–2 • Henninge Landaas (va); Tim Horton (pn) • LAWO 1027 (46:01)



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This is one of those strange discs where the musical and emotional aspects of the performance overcome certain blemishes in the performer's tone, in this case Henninge Landaas's viola sound. It is not only dark but acidic and a bit edgy, but she is consistent in her acid timbre and gives very impassioned readings of these works, which the composer adapted from his late clarinet sonatas.

In fact, both Landaas and pianist Tim Horton are entirely on the same page interpretively. Their control of not only dynamics but also emotional mood swings and phrasing are absolutely dead-on. I have the feeling that they have been playing these sonatas together for a long time. There is little or nothing one can fault in terms of musical shaping, and in fact their intensity of expression is quite remarkable ... and never more so than in the tricky-to-pull-off final Andante con moto of the Second Sonata, where they achieve perfect synthesis with the music. This is no small achievement.

This recording is a perfect blend of sensitivity and drama. Competing versions include those by violist Rachel Roberts and pianist Lars Vogt on Avi 8553181 (which Jerry Dubins raved about recently), and Roberto Diaz and Jeremy Denk on Naxos 8570827, praised in these pages by Burton Rothleder.

Lynn René Bayley