

# theStrad

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MARCH 2007

SELECTION OF THE MONTH: HEINE QUARTET

## CHAMBER

theStrad **SELECTION**

**Heine Quartet: intimate playing**

**BRAHMS** String Quartet A minor op.51/2

**JANÁČEK** String Quartet Nr.2 "Intimate Letters"

## Heine Quartet

Ida Bieler, Violine

Ulrich Gröner, Violine

Matthias Buchholz, Viola

Christoph Richter, Violoncello

Genuin GEN 86066

This unusual pairing of quartets is partly explained in the accompanying notes by their common inspiration in friendships: Brahms and Joachim, and Janáček and his adored Kamila Stösslova. It is an effective one, and perfectly suited to the strengths of this fine ensemble. The Heine Quartet brings to both works a sustained intensity and wide emotional range, with clean, clear playing and superb balance. The players adroitly negotiate the mood shifts of Brahms, genial and relaxed at the outset, marked by an easy rubato, with outbursts of Beethovenian drama in the latter stages of the first movement and agitated rhetoric amid the sometimes bleak beauty of the second.

The players show a judicious and effective use of vibrato: sweet in Brahms's engaging melodies; spare or absent altogether in his more melancholy moments. They are abetted by an acoustic that allows both satisfying clarity and fullness of sound. The quartet's skill in holding a course through disparate material, which shows again to great effect in the diffuse finale of Brahms, is the major element in a particularly satisfying performance of the Janáček. This is indeed intimate playing: the composers' constant shifts of direction, the endless subtle recoloring of material and the extremes of expression are wonderfully caught. There is a strong sense of structure here, tying together the fragments and discursions, producing a cumulative depth and complexity of feeling that is profoundly moving.

TIM HOMFRAY