

# AUDIOPHILE AUDITION

January 15, 2010

MENDELSSOHN: 2 Piano Trios; Trio for piano, violin and cello; Lied ohne Worte for cello and piano; Albumblatt für Julius Rietz - Alte Musik Köln with Tobias Koch, piano - Ars Production

The performers inject the usual Romantic tradition with a series of musical injections, Brahms instead of Botox, which restore its youthful energy and good looks.

Published on January 15, 2010



MENDELSSOHN: Piano Trios Op. 49 & 66; Trio for piano, violin and cello; Lied ohne Worte for cello and piano; Albumblatt für Julius Rietz - Alte Musik Köln (Christine Rox, violin. Mathias Feger, viola. Klaus-Dieter Brandt, cello) with Tobias Koch, piano - Ars Produktion multichannel SACD ARS 38059, 75 mins. [Distr. by Qualiton] \*\*\*\*\*:

If the recently-completed Mendelssohn year had added nothing else, this new recording of chamber music would have been more than enough.

It's certainly a surprise: Alte Musik Köln is a period music ensemble (Monteverdi to Bach and Handel) founded in the fall of 2006 by Klaus-Dieter Brandt as successors to the famous, trail-blazing original-instrument crew named Musica Antiqua Köln. I guess it makes sense that, true to their maverick heritage, the first thing Alte Musik Köln records is music by Mendelssohn. Good thing that the performances are also trail-blazing.

The performers inject the usual Romantic tradition with a series of musical injections, Brahms instead of Botox, which restore its youthful energy and good looks. They have decided that Mendelssohn had an appetite for musical adventure and ride the music hard --although, when required, they can be pussycats, too. It's more than outward change: It's a fundamental commitment to see the music as a profound expression of Mendelssohn's personality, not just classical music entertainment.

For librarians and collector types, the programing is highly ingenious and unique. In addition to the two famous trios there's a frisky early trio for the unusual combination piano, violin and viola, and a selection of nominally salon pieces for cello and piano with Mendelssohn's legendary power to break hearts and mend them all on the same night .

On top of its being a brilliant new look at Mendelssohn's music, this new SACD release, even in the conventional stereo layer, has a richness and bloom that challenges the musical experiences in the finest halls with its intimacy and focus.

The musicians play on intriguing old instruments which have been expertly restored. Cellist Klaus-Dieter Brandt is himself a maker and, in the program book, contributes a strict but panoramic view of the authentic performance practice movement as seen from Köln.

Credit where credit is due: The producer was Annette Schumacher. The tonmeister was Manfred Schumacher. The recording was made in the Evangelische Church of Honrath. This is one shrine I'd go to worship at.

-- Laurence Vittes