

Johannes Brahms. *Clarinet Quintet in B minor*, Op. 115. G. Henle Verlag, 2000. Study score and set of parts.

Brahms' indoctrination to chamber music with winds began in 1843 when as a 10-year-old pianist he joined colleagues of his father in a performance of Beethoven's *Quintet for Piano and Winds*. Fast-forward to 1890. Brahms was enjoying his prominent artistic popularity and had declared his *String Quintet in G major*, Op. 111 to be his crowning and final composition. The next year Brahms heard clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld performing at the court in Meiningen. Mühlfeld's lovely playing inspired Brahms to immediately begin simultaneous work on his *Trio for Piano, Clarinet, and Cello in A minor*, Op. 114 and the *Clarinet Quintet in B minor*, Op. 115 here at hand. Composition of both works was completed quickly and private first performances were given in Meiningen on November 24, 1891. Hand-written parts were used, as they were also for the first public performances of the *Quintet* in Berlin on December 12, 1891, and on January 5, 1892, in Vienna.

Andrea Massimo Grassi, editor of this edition, has used as its basis several sources: the autograph score housed with the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna, the first copyist's (William Kupfer) manuscript of the score, the first published edition (Simrock) and the first two editions of the separate parts (Simrock). Brahms' autograph is not considered his final version. During the period of the first performances he made numerous adjustments to his music. Likewise, the first published edition is not considered definitive as Simrock was hurrying the *Quintet* to publication despite Brahms' pleas for more time for proofreading. Grassi has examined all the sources and used her expert knowledge of Brahms' idiosyncratic hand-written notation to create a score and set of parts that are as near to Brahms' final conception as possible. In addition to correcting a few long-standing note errors and other errors made by Kupfer in preparing the first score from autograph, Grassi has taken special care for the correct placement of crescendo and diminuendo hairpins. What results is the latest critical thinking by a Brahms specialist in one of our greatest repertoire pieces. Readability and page layout is done in a highly pleasing manner.