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the **FINE ARTS**
QUARTET

and

REGINALD KELL

BRAHMS

QUINTET in B MINOR

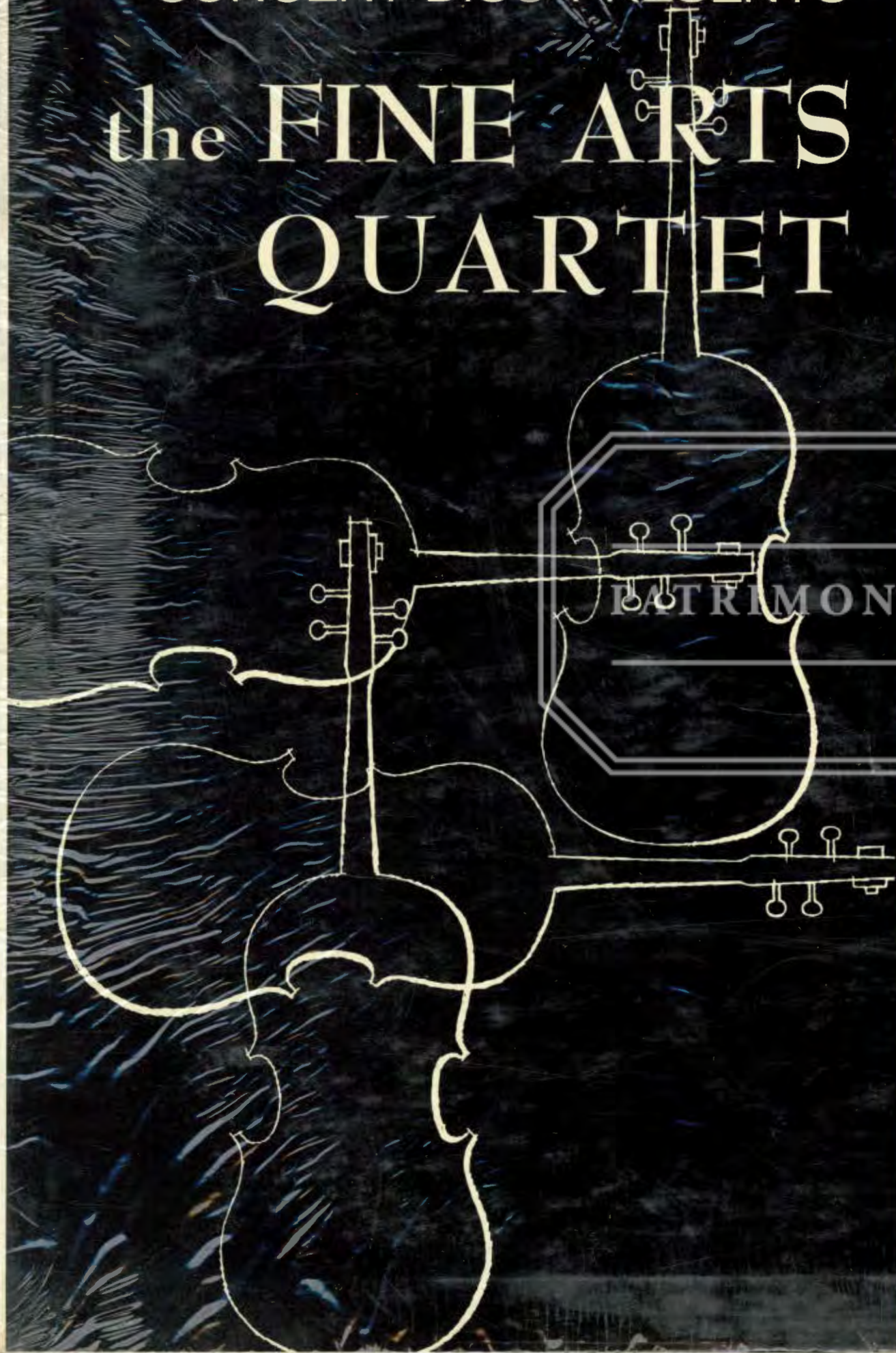
OPUS 115

PATRIMONIO UC

for Clarinet and Strings

as performed at

Royal Festival Hall, London



Stereo no.
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BRAHMS: QUINTET IN B MINOR, OPUS 115

FOR CLARINET AND STRINGS

THE FINE ARTS QUARTET

LEONARD SORKIN, Violin ABRAM LOFT, Violin IRVING ILMER, Viola GEORGE SOPKIN, Cello
with REGINALD KELL, Clarinet

In the entire literature of chamber-music, few works so justly hold the affection of concert audiences as the Brahms Clarinet Quintet. For this is one of the most fascinating compositions of a composer legendary for his seriousness, intensity, and concentration of musical thought. The meditation, the discarded efforts that preceded Brahms' release of his three essays in the string quartet medium are well known. So much the more richness and maturity of thought must be assumed with respect to this later composition, Brahms' one work for the clarinet-and-string-quartet grouping.

The close interaction of composer and performer is reflected in the very existence of the Quintet. In a letter written in July, 1891, Brahms reveals that he has composed both a trio (for piano, clarinet and cello, Opus 114), and a quintet (Opus 115) to feature the playing of Richard Muhlfeld, clarinetist and music director at the ducal court of Meiningen, Germany.

The quintet had its first public performance in Berlin on December 12, 1891, by the famed Joachim ensemble. The work, which Brahms in his wry way described as a "very decent" composition, won immediate acclaim and has maintained its popularity in the concert repertoire to this day.

Richly textured, the sound of the first movement is thick, plastic, compressed, hovering mostly in the darker, lower registers, except for an occasional flashing sally into the upper reaches. The feeling of resistance, of viscosity, is strengthened by the frequent use of off-beat rhythms: THREE-one-two, THREE-one-two . . .

From night to day: the contrast between the thick darkness of the first movement and the muted, floating, ethereal strands of sound in the second. Contrast, again, in the middle section of this slow movement: here, the clarinet spins a rhapsodic line reminiscent of the "gypsy" music that so intrigued Brahms. The gypsy element suggested further by the rippling accompaniment provided by the string instruments.

A studiously "lazy" and nonchalant third movement, walking its way through momentary passages of agitation . . . and a rather serious set of variations in the finale . . . round out the work.

The tone of the entire work is serious, for that matter. Were this a Brahms symphony, the *serioso* element might take on an overwhelming weight from the massiveness of orchestral sound. In the Quintet, however, it brings the listener compellingly near to a deeply sensitive musical personality.

Reginald Kell, distinguished British-born clarinetist, and The Fine Arts Quartet, one of America's foremost concert ensembles, have often played the Brahms Quintet together, most recently at Royal Festival Hall in London. A performance described, by one London critic, as "an unforgettable experience." This concert, by the way, was one of the highlights of The Fine Arts Quartet's triumphal first tour of Europe. A tour during which it earned such plaudits as "A phenomenal quartet" (Amsterdam); "A revelation" (London); "Extraordinary interpretative taste" (Genoa); "Deeply inspired" (Nuremberg).

Concert-Disc hopes that you, too, will find this recording—both in sound and performance—an "unforgettable experience" in your own record library. Certainly no medium other than stereophonic recording could bring you so believably close to the sound of the live performance. Your ear will tell you, anyway, but we thought we would point out that the seating of the performers is as follows: violins on the left; clarinet in the center; cello and viola on the right. The spacing is close, semicircular: Concert-Disc has sought to bring you the true realism of the actual performance, without any artificial or exaggerated directionalism.

SIDE 1

Allegro

Adagio

SIDE 2

Andantino

Con moto