

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Disc Reviews: David Finckel and Wu Han

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Classical

Brahms, Schumann, Mahler Piano Quartets

Daniel Hope, Paul Neubauer, David Finckel, Wu Han

[Deutsche Grammophon]

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I get a kick out of David Finckel and Wu Han. The husband-and-wife team – he's the cellist, she's the pianist – played Buffalo's Ramsi P. Tick Memorial Concert Series a few years ago and they were captivating together. Both of them act endearingly ditz. He mugs and squirms, and she gabs. And then they play, and they're just superb.

On this disc, recorded live at Lincoln Center, they are joined by violist Paul Neubauer and violinist Daniel Hope. And maybe this perception is colored by my memory, but they all sound as if they are having a fine time. The Mahler, a single-movement fragment in A Minor eloquently marked "Nicht zu schnell," is almost never heard. Mahler wrote it as a student, influenced by Bruckner and other great romanticists, and it has character and loveliness. Listening to it, you wished he had finished it.

The Schumann Piano Quartet, long unjustly eclipsed by his Piano Quintet, has always appealed to the best musicians. It also gets an attentive performance, particularly its glorious, sorrowing Andante Cantabile movement. The famous concluding Brahms G Minor Piano Quartet has a lot of fire, particularly the Gypsy last movement. The ending is wild. The crowd goes crazy. Live recordings really do have that certain something, and so does this music, which never loses its excitement.