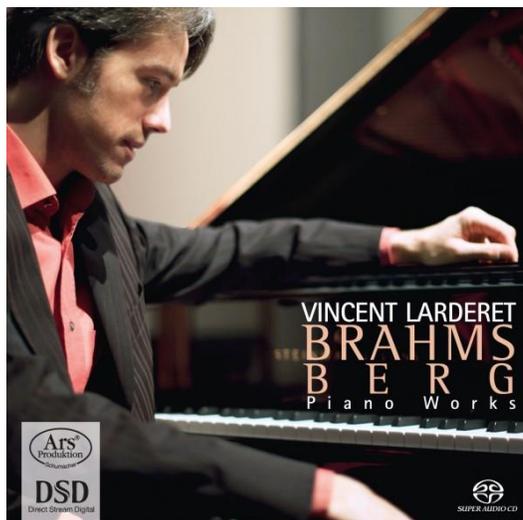




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**BRAHMS *Piano Sonata No. 3 op.5. Intermezzi, Op. 117* BERG *Piano Sonata, Op. 1***  
Vincent Larderet (pn) • ARS PRODUKTION ARS 38217 (65:24)

French pianist Vincent Larderet belongs to that class of artists who are both masterful technicians and intellectual. His compatriot Pierre-Laurent Aimard is also in this category, and in the previous generation we can include Maurizio Pollini, Alfred Brendel and Paul Badura-Skoda. These are all fantastic virtuosos capable of producing extraordinarily expressive playing, but those qualities are always wedded to insight and an ability to place the music they are playing into an historical context. On this CD, Larderet rolls out his program in chronological order, beginning with the hulking *Piano Sonata No. 3* of Brahms. His playing is electrifying in the faster music, and beguilingly calm in the slow music. He conveys a sense of a young genius still trying to find a proper vehicle for what is already a distinctive voice. This Sonata is something of an unwieldy and clattery work, though over-flowing with wonderful ideas, and that is the spirit of Larderet's performance. Skip ahead nearly forty years, to the coda of a great career, and we have the carefully sculpted *Intermezzi, op. 117*, with the passion now simmering beneath the delicate surface. Larderet finds the composer's peacefulness and serenity, in the pianist's words, "an entirely different world of chiaroscuro and subtle gradations of tone." This reflects the thoughtfulness of this artist's esthetic.

Alban Berg's *Piano Sonata* flows easily from late Brahms in this recital. Larderet views the music as a link between that music, Mahler, and the groundbreaking music of Berg's teacher, Schoenberg. It is a work, in this sense, that looks backward and forward at once, and Larderet carries this out with as much expressivity and cohesiveness as any performance of this music that I have heard.

Vincent Larderet is a new name to me, but this powerful recital makes him a figure to be reckoned with. He demonstrates that brains and brawn can be a great combination of strengths for a pianist to possess. I eagerly look forward to hearing more from him.

**Peter Burwasser**