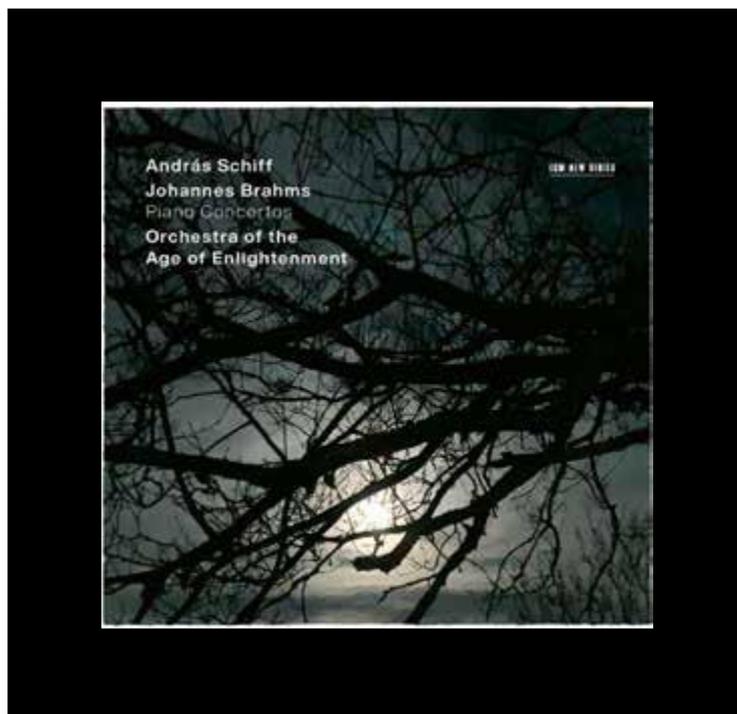


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ANDRAS SCHIFF & ORCHESTRA OF THE
AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT
JOHANNES BRAHMS: PIANO CONCERTOS



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“My enthusiasm for Brahms goes back to my youth, and the piano concertos are largely responsible for it,” writes Sir András Schiff in a liner note for this remarkable new recording.

It finds the great pianist reassessing interpretive approaches to Brahms in the inspired company of the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment**. To fully bring out the characteristics of Brahms’s music Schiff’s choice of instrument is a **Blüthner** piano built in Leipzig around 1859, the year in which the D minor concerto was premiered.

The historically informed **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** plays with the flexibility, attitude, and responsiveness of a chamber music ensemble, as they work without a conductor, listening attentively to each other.

Sir András Schiff’s collaboration with the orchestra in a series of concerts was widely acclaimed: ***“Brahms’s First Piano Concerto was reborn thanks to the OAE’s incisive playing and András Schiff’s characterful phrasing”***, The Guardian exclaimed.

The musicians' mutual wish to recapture the experience led to the present double album, recorded in London in December 2019.

András Schiff had already turned to period instruments on some of his earlier recordings for ECM's New Series, including his **two double albums with Schubert's late piano works**, for which he used a fortepiano built by **Franz Brodmann in 1820**. He had used the same instrument for his double album **with Beethoven's Diabelli Variations**, contrasting this version with a reading of the same work on a Bechstein grand of 1921. Now Sir András has chosen the conductor-less Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, with its period instruments, for his recording of the two Brahms concertos. He plays an historic grand piano built by **the Leipzig firm of Julius Bluthner in 1859**.

The result is nothing less than an attempt *'to recreate and restore the works, to cleanse the music and to liberate it from the burden of the - often questionable -trademarks of performing tradition'*.

At times the recordings take on the quality of chamber music, as is especially telling in the last two movements of the B-flat major Concerto (op. 83). The result is a performance that approaches the original character of the sound, revealing those layers of the works that emphasise the dialogue between soloist and orchestra- and dispelling the preconception that the Second Concerto is a 'symphony with piano obligato'.

"Any fears that the smaller orchestra would lack the requisite power for the concerto's stormy opening movement and its driving finale were dispelled by the OAE's incisive playing." - The Guardian

"Schiff's technique and, in particular, his characterful phrasing, meant that those Brahmsian fistfuls of notes that are so often simply swamped now came up gleaming and freshly articulated....." The Guardian

[Read the 5* review in the Times](#)

