



Johannes Brahms / May 7, 1833 – April 3, 1897

## **SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN D MAJOR**

Because Brahms feared being unfavorably compared to Beethoven, he did not write his epic First Symphony until he was forty-three years old. Its success and acceptance by the public fortunately erased Brahms's neurotic fear, and his Second Symphony appeared only one year later. In mood, his Second is markedly different from his First, possibly because the weight of Beethoven's legacy had been lifted from his compositional shoulders. Gone are the austere utterances and tension of the First. In their place, Brahms treats us to music that is mostly lyric and sunny, sometimes even playful. It is wonderfully idyllic and fresh, reminiscent of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, the Pastoral, that followed his heroic Fifth. Brahms's Second does have moments of pensive and introspective poetry, but not for long. It overflows with pleasing graceful melodies, prompting one critic to write, "Mozartian blood flows in its veins."

The final movement marked "allegro con spirito," ends with a blazing coda of overwhelming brilliance.

While he was writing this symphony, Brahms penned this tongue-in-cheek note to a well-known acerbic critic: "In the course of the winter I shall let you hear a symphony that sounds so cheerful and delightful you will think I wrote it especially for you, or rather your young wife." Brahms, always the rapier-witted joker.