Darius Milhaud & Bohuslav Martinů: Complete Works for String Trio

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American Record Guide (Stephen Estep - 01.01.2018)
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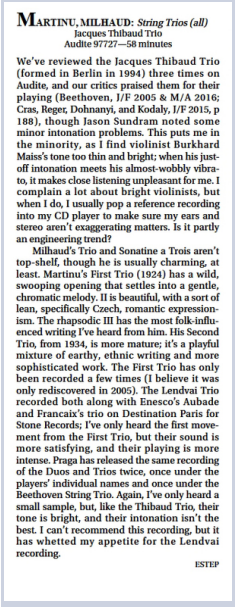
We've reviewed the Jacques Thibaud Trio (formed in Berlin in 1994) three times on Audite, and our critics praised them for their playing (Beethoven, J/F 2005 & M/A 2016; Cras, Reger, Dohnanyi, and Kodaly, J/F 2015, p 188), though Jason Sundram noted some minor intonation problems. This puts me in the minority, as I find violinist Burkhard Maiss's tone too thin and bright; when his just-off intonation meets his almost-wobbly vibrato, it makes close listening unpleasant for me. I complain a lot about bright violinists, but when I do, I usually pop a reference recording into my CD player to make sure my ears and stereo aren't exaggerating matters. Is it partly an engineering trend?

Milhaud's Trio and Sonatine a Trois aren't top-shelf, though he is usually charming, at least. Martinu's First Trio (1924) has a wild, swooping opening that settles into a gentle, chromatic melody. II is beautiful, with a sort of lean, specifically Czech, romantic expressionism. The rhapsodic III has the most folk-influenced writing I've heard from him. His Second Trio, from 1934, is more mature; it's a playful mixture of earthy, ethnic writing and more sophisticated work. The First Trio has only been recorded a few times (I believe it was only rediscovered in 2005). The Lendvai Trio recorded both along with Enesco's Aubade and Francaix's trio on Destination Paris for Stone Records; I've only heard the first movement from the First Trio, but their sound is more satisfying, and their playing is more intense. Praga has released the same recording of the Duos and Trios twice, once under the players' individual names and once under the Beethoven String Trio. Again, I've only heard a small sample, but, like the Thibaud Trio, their tone is bright, and their intonation isn't the best. I can't recommend this recording, but it has whetted my appetite for the Lendvai recording.


Martinu, Milhaud: *String Trios (all)*
Jacques Thibaud Trio
Audite 97727—58 minutes

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