



Ludwig van Beethoven: Complete Works for Piano Trio - Vol. 3

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This series presents the Beethoven trios not in chronological order, but as integral concert programs. This release has a very lovely ambience and sound, something that I think is overlooked in many recordings. The Swiss Piano Trio has a fine pedigree and has won many awards. There is certainly some stiff competition from other giants such as the Vienna Trio (MDG) and Perlman-Ashkenazy-Harrell (EMI), but these performances stand up well and are not unworthy for their attention to dynamic detail, beautiful timbre, and expressive sensitivity. Nothing is lacking here, and these recordings perhaps have a little edge in that the performers have studied historical information, such as metronome markings as noted by Czerny.

[De Gelderlander](#) 18 mei 2016 (Maarten-Jan Dongelmans - 2016.05.18)



Klassiek: Het Swiss Piano Trio biedt het beste van twee werelden

Er zijn meerdere topnamen van de complete pianotrio's van Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) – ik hoef alleen maar de naam van het Beaux Arts Trio te noemen – maar mijn voorkeur gaat uit naar deze in januari 2015 gestarte reeks van het Duitse kwaliteitslabel Audite. [...] Lering trekken uit de muzikwetenschap en dat combineren met ultiem speelplezier: het Swiss Piano Trio biedt het beste van twee werelden.

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

I'm not sure what happened to Volume II in the Swiss Piano Trio's ongoing Beethoven cycle, but in 39:1 I gave high marks to the ensemble's Volume I, and here is Volume III. Volume II does exist. It was released a year ago and contained the G-Major Trio, op. 1/2, and the "Ghost" Trio, op. 70/1; but I know I didn't receive it, and it doesn't look like any of my colleagues did either. Be that as it may, I've received other Swiss Piano Trios releases that have come to me for review—namely Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Eduard Franck—and have had high praise for all of them. That continues to be the case with this new release.

In keeping to its commitment to record Beethoven's complete works for violin, cello, and piano—as have the Trio *Élégiaque* and others—the Swiss Piano Trio here includes one of the composer's early, offbeat works, the *Variations on an Original Theme*, op. 44. The advanced opus number reflects the date of publication by Franz Hoffmeister in 1804, a dozen years after the piece is believed to have been written in 1792. If the theme is "original" (questionable to begin with), little else about the score is.

Beethoven borrowed heavily from Carl von Dittersdorf's opera *Das rote Käppchen* (The Little Red Cap). Nonetheless, as Richard Rodda wrote, "Beethoven worked 14 conventional variations and a coda into this lean material, allowing all three instruments leading moments and eliciting some deeper emotions with two minor-key episodes. It's an example of Beethoven spinning gold, or at least silver, from humble materials." Beethoven's first works to receive official publication, his op. 1, was a set of three piano trios in 1795, but it's known that they were first performed in the house of Prince Lichnowsky, their dedicatee, in 1793, which means they had to be composed around the same time as the foregoing variations. Third in the set, the C-Minor Trio already exhibits the emotional intensity and angst that so shocked his early Viennese audiences and that catapulted his music from polite drawing-room society into the public arena.

Some 16 years later, in 1808, Beethoven set about composing another two piano trios, this time published as a pair under the opus number 70. It's rather amazing to think about the works Beethoven turned out in those intervening years, not just the number of them, but the import of those works to music history—six of his nine symphonies, all of his early and middle string quartets, 23 of his 32 piano sonatas, all but the last of his concertos, and the list goes on. But the second of Beethoven's two op. 70 Piano Trios, not unlike several of his other works, not to mention works by other composers as well, has been relegated to a lower status simply due to its proximity to another like work made popular by a nickname. Op. 70/1, dubbed the "Ghost," enjoys greater recognition because of its nickname.

Personally, I've always found its nameless companion, op. 70/2, included on the present release, the more interesting of the two works. For one thing, Beethoven devotes the first half of the development section to exploring the first movement's second theme, unusual enough in itself, but what he does with it is truly breathtaking, as he passes phrases back and forth between the instruments while modulating through a number of keys. Then midway through, there's a false recapitulation that fools you into thinking the reprise has arrived when, in fact, the development still hasn't run its course. The following *Allegretto* is one of those enigmatic scherzo-like movements that begins almost flippantly and then turns suddenly militant and menacing. Is it a joke? What does it mean? The third movement, another *Allegretto*, this time *ma non troppo*, is perhaps the most beautiful movement of all; if not that, then surely it points to those moments in Beethoven's late piano sonatas and string quartets in which he achieves a sense of ecstatic expectancy and quiet rapture in phrases that seem strangely incomplete, yet searching for fulfillment. The principal theme of this *Allegretto* poses the same sense of yearning for some resolution that Beethoven never gives us, as he repeats the melody over and over again. The finale is an explosion of pure unbridled joy that wants to break the bonds of the instruments that constraint it.

With this latest release by the Swiss Piano Trio I'm prepared to double down, even triple down on every admiring and praiseworthy thing I've said about this ensemble. For some time now, I've been extolling the

virtues of the Trio Élégiacque's Beethoven piano trio cycle, and I'm not about to change my mind about it, but I will say that the Swiss Piano Trio's cycle is shaping up to be every bit as superb. These are exceptionally gifted players who perform with unerring technical perfection and instinctive musical intelligence that never misjudges the significance of a single note. Very, very strongly recommended.

WDR 3 TonArt | 21.06.2016 (- 2016.06.21)

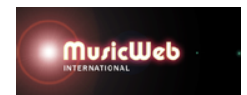


BROADCAST

Sämtliche Klaviertrios von Beethoven nimmt das Schweizer Klaviertrio auf. Gerade ist Volume 3 des Projektes erschienen. Christoph Vratz hat die CD gehört.

www.musicweb-international.com Tuesday August 23rd (Colin Clarke - 2016.08.23)

source: <http://www.musicweb-international.com/cl...>



My Musicweb International colleague David Barker reviewed Volume 2 of this five-disc series in December 2015 (who knows, maybe even concurrently with the Swiss Trio recording the Variations presented here). If five discs seems a lot of space, it is because they are making their survey into Beethoven's works for piano trio as comprehensive as possible, and including not only the Triple Concerto, but also the Trio, Op. 38, the original arrangement of the Septet, Op. 20. There is a lot going for Volume 3, not least the rather interesting premise that the Swiss Piano Trio (Schweizer Klaviertrio) has used Czerny's *Erinnerungen an Beethoven* (Reminiscences of Beethoven, Vienna, 1842) as an inspiration for their interpretations, particularly the chapter "On the correct performance of Beethoven's complete works with piano accompaniment."

Perhaps as an extension of this informed approach, the booklet notes on the works themselves are remarkably detailed. Such attention to detail extends to the performances themselves, all of them caught in a fabulous, perfectly-placed recording.

The Piano Trio, Op. 1/3, in Beethoven's favourite C minor key, is a major four-movement statement which holds in place of a slow movement an "Andante cantabile con variazioni," which actually here is the highlight of the performance. The five variations are expertly characterised, and they are not afraid of internalising. Sighing phrases are deliciously done; the group is not afraid of drama, also. And excellent programming, to boot, in that this prefigures the larger set of Variations to follow (Op. 44). The Menuetto has its more restless moments (deliberately coming across as a touch off-centre), but it has its beauties, also, not least the feather touch of pianist Martin Lucas Staub in the rapid upward-reaching gestures. The finale's strong outbursts of energy are perfectly judged.

Beethoven's Variation sets always hold much interest as well as delight, and Op. 44 is no exception. The E flat major theme is simple and bare-boned, given out in mezzo-staccato and in octaves, primed for exploration, and the succeeding 14 Variations include much eloquence from the present performers, not least from Sébastien Singer's cello. Finally, the Piano Trio No. 6 of 1808, also in E flat. The skeletal Poco sostenuto opening is taken at a very flowing tempo, following Czerny, and enables the Allegro ma non troppo main body of the movement to emerge naturally. The allegro itself holds some lovely sighing gestures, while the second movement Allegretto holds some real grit. The ensuing Allegro ma non troppo is a dream, with a terrific sense of flow; the finale feels perfectly calculated here, from its baseline tempo

through its exploration of the varying terrain. No mere throwaway finale, this movement balances the depth of the first movement. The Swiss Piano trio gives a remarkably satisfying account of this rewarding piece.

A lovely release, one that shows the dynamism of these works. Collectors will doubtless have their favourites in this repertoire, for many it will be the Beaux Arts Trio, although I hold a particular affection for Kempff with Szeryng and Fournier on DG in the two main Trios.



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