

audite

Complete Works for Piano Trio Vol. V
& TRIPLE CONCERTO



ZURICH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

SWISS
PIANO TRIO

BEETHOVEN

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**Variations in G major, Op. 121a on 'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu'** 16:27

Introduzione. Adagio assai – Tema. Allegretto

Piano Trio in E-flat major, WoO 38

- I. Allegro moderato 4:15
- II. Scherzo. Allegro ma non troppo 4:42
- III. Rondo. Allegretto 5:08

Allegretto in B-flat major, WoO 39 5:39**Concerto in C major, Op. 56 'Triple Concerto'**

- I. Allegro 17:58
- II. Largo 5:05
- III. Rondo alla Polacca 13:44

SCHWEIZER
KLAVIERTRIOSWISS
PIANO TRIOAngela Golubeva, violin
Sasha Neustroev, cello
Martin Lucas Staub, piano

ZURICH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Concertmaster: Willi Zimmermann

The Complete Works for Piano Trio by Beethoven

Following great critical acclaim – as well as numerous awards for their complete recordings of the Piano Trios by Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky and Robert and Clara Schumann for the audite label – the Swiss Piano Trio have, since January 2015, been working on their most significant recording project to date: that of the complete Beethoven Piano Trios. After the successful release of the first four volumes, they now present Vol. V, the final installment of the five-part series, revealing fascinating insights across the entire development of Beethoven's musical language, from the astonishing three Trios Op. 1 from his early, Classical period, through his middle period, to which the Trios Op. 70 can be attributed, to the *Archduke* Trio Op. 97, marking the beginning of his late oeuvre.

Alongside the famous works, the Swiss Piano Trio are also recording the Trio Op. 38, an original arrangement for piano trio of Beethoven's Septet Op. 20 which has been left out of many complete recordings. The Triple Concerto for Piano Trio and Orchestra Op. 56 is also not to be missed: here, Beethoven ingeniously employs the chamber formation of the piano trio as an ensemble of soloists in dialogue with the orchestra.

Rather than issuing the works in chronological order, as is the case with most complete recordings, it is our philosophy to present each of the five CDs as a diverse programme, combining early and later works as well as the variations, creating five exciting concert programmes which allow the listener directly to compare Beethoven's different creative periods.

Beethoven's trios make up their own musical cosmos whose stylistic spectrum represents an enormous challenge to their interpreters. The early trios in the Classical style demand a much slimmer and more transparent tone than the almost symphonic *Archduke* Trio Op. 97, or the Trio Op. 70 No 2, whose musical language already anticipates the Romantic style. Finally, Beethoven's very last work for piano trio, the Allegretto WoO 39, exudes an almost Schubertian affinity for melody.

Carl Czerny's *Reminiscences of Beethoven* (Vienna, 1842) has proved to be an inspiring treasure trove with regard to interpretation – in the chapter “Über den richtigen Vortrag der sämtlichen Beethoven'schen Werke für das Piano mit Begleitung” (On the correct performance of Beethoven's complete works for piano with accompaniment), he comments on all the piano trios and adds suggestions for interpretation. As Beethoven's pupil, and later also friend, Czerny had studied nearly all works for, and with, piano under the guidance of the composer and was thus also intimately familiar with the chamber works. His tempo markings, however, are surprising at times, in some slow movements revealing themselves to be more flowing, whilst others are more held back than expected.

In their recording of the Triple Concerto, the Swiss Piano Trio have broken new ground by performing the score without a conductor, despite its highly demanding interplay between solo ensemble and orchestra. The pianist and concertmaster lead in tandem, making it possible to better highlight the piece's interconnectedness that is characteristic of a chamber work. For this to be possible, the Swiss Piano Trio's familiarity with every detail of the score is required, together with a small, finely-tuned orchestra that is capable of playing almost like a chamber ensemble and of spirited, transparent music-making in dialogue with the solo ensemble. Joining in partnership with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, with its long and rich tradition, the Swiss Piano Trio present the Triple Concerto as a juxtaposition of two chamber ensembles of different sizes, namely the piano trio and chamber orchestra.

In these recordings the Swiss Piano Trio deliberately steer away from the encyclopaedic approach and instead concentrate on the pleasure and delight in Beethoven's inexhaustible creativeness and his ever-fresh music.

audite



Ludwig van Beethoven:
Complete Works for Piano Trio, Vol. V

The program of this fifth and final installment of Beethoven's piano trios not only closes the circle by including one of Beethoven's very early works of the genre alongside one of his last. With the *Kakadu Variations* and the so-called Triple Concerto, it also presents two works that do not feature particularly prominently in the awareness of Beethoven admirers. One is regarded as an occasional work, while the other does not fully share the characteristics usually attributed to Beethoven's music. Nevertheless, all four works must and should be taken seriously, since each, in its own way, reflects the musical universe of an artist who "always [had] the whole in view," as he said of himself in 1814. The conductor and musicologist Peter Gülke, to whom we owe some of the subtlest and most thoughtful Beethoven interpretations, expanded on this image when he described Beethoven's work as a "continually renewed effort [...] to look beyond the margins of particular wholes toward more comprehensive wholes: from the theme to the movement as a whole, from the movement to the work as a whole, from the work to the whole of a set of works or set of compositional problems, and from the music to the whole of the context of life and the world, in which music represents only a particularity." This implies nothing less than a new understanding of music itself, which Beethoven sought (and found): he felt that music should no longer limit itself to a subservient function or to the role of entertainment, but should rather reflect fundamental philosophical, religious, and life questions. In order to create music that "speaks to us" in both senses of the word, Beethoven needed to embark on a completely new compositional path. In doing so, he drew inspiration from Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, who, in the pre-Classical era, established a new ideal of "Empfindsamkeit" (sensitivity) in order to invest music with poetic content by means of certain rhetorical and expressive devices. In addition, he followed the example of his most important teacher, Joseph Haydn, in his striving to impart the musical process with the greatest possible inner logic and cohesion. If the first goal is to emotionally engage the listener, the second is to develop a compositional principle by bringing fixed (architectural) and flexible (processual) elements into balance through shared motivic-thematic figures. This gives rise to a unique interweaving of continuity and contrast that can be found, from differing perspectives, in every musical genre that Beethoven applied himself to – taking the form of a monologue in his piano music, a dialogue in his chamber music and, finally, a larger scale in his symphonies and concertos. In addition, the evolution of his piano trios also reveals that within a single genre or formal principle (i.e. the sonata, symphony, concerto, or variation), a wide spectrum of solutions is possible, ranging between the objective (motivic-thematic and contrapuntal-polyphonic) and subjective (cantabile-melodic and harmonically daring) extremes. Beethoven thus provided composers well into the twentieth century with a way of formulating a compositional problem that proved to be exceptionally fruitful – we need only recall Anton Webern's late chamber music works, like his String Quartet, op. 28, or Arnold Schoenberg's String Trio, op. 45.

The Triple Concerto, op. 56 does not quite seem to fit into this context, despite the fact that its opus number and year of composition (1803/04) place it precisely between two of Beethoven's most important and popular contributions to instrumental music, the Third Symphony, op. 55 ("Eroica") and the Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor, op. 57 ("Appassionata"). It has thus posed a somewhat awkward dilemma for most of the prominent commentators, if they did not choose to ignore it altogether (like Theodor W. Adorno and Carl Dahlhaus). A praiseworthy exception here is the great

English musicologist Donald Tovey. Even the first reactions to the piece betrayed a certain consternation, as we read in the anonymous critique of the work's May 1808 premiere at the Palais Augarten in Vienna, printed in the *Leipziger Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung (AMZ)*: "The composer gives almost unprecedented free rein to his rich fantasy, but often lets it run rampant. The work contains such an overflowing mass of figures and, particularly in the overloaded first movement, of disparate figures; B. indulges himself to such an extent – especially in the first movement – in difficulties that are deliberately sought, scarcely manageable, yet often ineffective, and there are so many bizarre and muddled combinations, that we would tend to follow him out of duty rather than pleasure if we were not also surprised by passages as well-conceived as they are beautifully expressed, if we were not so splendidly compensated by the much less overloaded, quite new, spirited, and expressive third movement, reconciling us as much as possible with the whole. As well as the concerto was performed and accompanied, and as much as B.'s compositions enjoy the favor of this audience, nevertheless, the work met only with moderate approval." However, the third movement – the "Rondo à la polacca" – won the favor of the reviewer, and apparently also of the Viennese audience. A polonaise, the movement's national character and dance idiom was probably most well-suited to the expectations of listeners attuned to "exotic" charms. This is also confirmed by the critique of an arrangement of the polonaise made by the German composer and organist August Eberhard Müller (who was also one of the founding members of the *AMZ*) the same year, after the score was published. As we read in the review, which appeared in the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*: "What a tuneful melody! What subtle and unexpected transitions! What an ingenious, yet always graceful and interesting treatment and execution of the ideas."

It is still somewhat perplexing that the Finale was so much more readily understood than the first movement, despite the fact that they share the same extended length, made necessary by what is essentially a threefold introduction of the thematic material by the soloists. Perhaps the lighter form of the Finale – a classical rondo, which also appears in all the piano concertos as well as the Violin Concerto – and the engagingly-presented themes, with their compelling rhythm and (at times) earthy humor, were enough to overcome any impression of unwieldiness? The first movement must have been puzzling indeed to listeners in 1808, as can already be expected from Beethoven's original title of the work on its first printing: "GRAND CONCERTO / CONCERTANT / pour / Pianoforte, Violon et Violoncelle [etc.]" What, we must ask, is a "concertante concerto"? The Classical period includes examples of the "concertante symphony" in the works of Mozart and other composers. With this paradoxical title, Beethoven evidently wanted to express the fact that there is not just one soloist interacting with the orchestra in concerto fashion, but also three soloists doing the same amongst themselves. But this also means that he was fully conscious of the problem of the threefold exposition. He solved it by setting up a dialogue between the instruments from the very beginning: either the violin and cello form a sort of duet, with the piano independently borrowing from their material, or all three instruments respond to one another imitatively. In this way the movement's length can be at least mitigated. But Beethoven goes a step further by keeping the development in the first movement quite short and, in the reprise, by not permitting himself any major changes with respect to the exposition. As a result, the thematic work is all the more concentrated and economical; with its strict limitations, it remains (as so often with Haydn) almost monothematic in order to keep everything from falling apart at the seams. The incisive dotted rhythm of the main theme plays an essential role in this regard. All these elements give rise to a rather block-like structure in which other factors provide the tension and variety – above all the harmonic turns, as Beethoven employs deceptive cadences or diverts the harmonic development into unexpected realms (like the third-related

A major of the development which is arrived at via the tonic parallel of A minor). In the slow movement, the key of A major once again is chromatically blurred into A-flat major, immersing the music in a sort of Romantic realm of “sensibility.” The brevity of the Larghetto in relation to the outer movements is conspicuous: in principle, it is nothing other than an extended transition between the first and third movements, a feature typical of some of Beethoven’s slow movements (for example, the “Waldstein” Sonata). But though it serves as a bridge, this does not deprive it of tension and expressive intensity – on the contrary, here Beethoven creates, on a small scale, a tender and intimate sphere that stands in marked contrast to the monumental character of the first movement and the brisk and cheerful finale. When we consider the work as a whole, we realize not only how skillfully it is constructed, but also how successfully it unites the demands of both chamber and symphonic music. This explains why Carl Reinecke’s arrangement of the Triple Concerto as a piano trio did not gain acceptance, despite the fact that it was not only a well-meaning, but also a well-done attempt to bring the work back to its seemingly natural chamber music roots. But it is characteristic of Beethoven’s special place in music history that he continually calls into question the shackles and constraints of an unseen norm before surpassing them.

Beethoven cultivated the variation from the very beginning, a form that felt his influence up to the twentieth century. It, too, is a Baroque legacy, going back to the beginnings of instrumental music in the sixteenth century. Beethoven not only wrote 31 independent variation cycles, but also integrated the variation in his solo and chamber music works from the outset – usually in the slow movements, like in the first (op. 1, no. 1) and last (op. 97) piano trios, but occasionally also in the first movements, as in the Piano Sonata in A-flat major, op. 26. It is not known when Beethoven composed the Variations on “Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu,” op. 121a. Published in 1824 with an opus number that immediately follows that of the celebrated *Diabelli Variations*, it was probably written much earlier. Beethoven may have composed the work as early as 1802/03, while another conjecture based on the keyboard range of the piano part suggests that it dates from around 1809; he himself mentions the work in a letter from 1816. The variations derive their name from the popular song *Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu* from the Singspiel *Irrtum in allen Ecken oder die Schwestern von Prag*, written in 1794 by Wenzel Müller (1759–1835), a composer and conductor who worked at Vienna’s Theater in der Leopoldstadt. The most remarkable feature of Beethoven’s variations is found at the beginning, a slow introduction in G minor that includes no references whatsoever to the later theme, but can rather be interpreted as a kind of search for it. The simplicity and freshness of the theme thus stands in marked contrast to its introduction. While the theme is humorous, the introduction seems to be measuring its compositional potential, which is developed in the following ten variations (during which the instrumentalists naturally also have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities). In this respect, it is indeed comparable to the *Diabelli Variations*, where Diabelli’s seemingly “trivial” waltz theme serves as the point of departure for the most extraordinary transformations before unexpectedly returning to the simplicity of the beginning in the graceful concluding movement. We find something similar in the *Kakadu Variations*, in which Beethoven recalls the theme once more in a melancholy vein before pizzicati in the strings and a few lightly-tossed chords in the piano cheerfully usher out the piece.

With the exception of Mozart or Mendelssohn, even a genius needs a certain amount of time to develop, as testified by the Piano Trio, WoO 38 (1790/91). Dating from the Bonn period, it was part of Beethoven’s unpublished estate. The manuscript came into the possession of his secretary Anton Schindler, who had it printed by the Frankfurt music publisher Friedrich Philipp Dunst in 1830. In a statement appended to the work,

Ferdinand Ries, the pupil of Czerny, Diabelli, and Beethoven, vouched for its authenticity, though its individuality is of course not yet very pronounced. With all its professional fluency, the overriding thematic and formal impression is one of schematic, formulaic writing, underscored by its harmonic uniformity. All three movements – a brief sonata movement, a scherzo in three-part song form, and a rondo – “go from” E-flat major, to use the contemporary terminology. The only new feature is the first use of the term “scherzo” in place of the “minuet,” probably in order to experiment with a certain flexibility in the movement’s character. It lacks a slow movement, which might suggest that the young Beethoven did not yet feel confident in his ability to write music of expressive depth, or else that the piece was written for a convivial social occasion. The work thus remains halfway between a divertimento and a more substantial form.

The Allegretto in B-flat major, WoO 39 is Beethoven’s final word in the piano trio genre. He composed the movement in a single day on June 26, 1812 and dedicated it to Maximiliane Brentano, the talented ten-year-old daughter of his long-time friend Antonie Brentano “to encourage her in her piano playing”; eight years later he would also dedicate his Piano Sonata in E major, op. 109 to her. Perhaps this explains why the piano, present almost without interruption, is at the center of the work. But the movement’s opening already demonstrates how Beethoven ingeniously plays with the principle of “obligato accompaniment” as the two strings provide the tonic underpinning for the 6/4 chord in the left hand of the piano. The piano’s dominance is thus mitigated by the incomplete chord in the left hand; harmonically speaking, it is a so-called suspension, a dissonance requiring that the strings, playing at a soft dynamic level, confirm and stabilize the key. This reversal of roles, which continues up to the ninth measure, reflects the character of the movement, creating a lyrical and hovering atmosphere that already anticipates the sound and the conceptual world of his late works. Even in this ostensibly occasional work, we find, as always, the “whole” Beethoven.

Wolfgang Rathert

Translation: *Aaron Epstein*



Since its foundation in 1998 the Swiss Piano Trio has gained a remarkable reputation both among experts and audiences as an ensemble of extraordinary homogeneity, technical perfection and great expressiveness. Today, the Swiss Piano Trio is one of the most acclaimed chamber ensembles of its generation.

The Swiss Piano Trio won first prize at the International Chamber Music Competition in Caltanissetta (Italy) in 2003 and at the Johannes Brahms Competition (Austria) in 2005. In the same year, the Trio won the Swiss Ambassador's Award at Wigmore Hall. The Swiss Piano Trio has received important artistic impulses from Menahem Pressler (Beaux Arts Trio), Stephan Goerner (Carmina Quartet), Valentin Berlinsky (Borodin Quartet), the Vienna Altenberg Trio, the Trio di Milano and the Amadeus Quartet.

The ensemble has given many concerts in more than 40 countries on all continents. The concert venues include music centers such as the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, the Zurich Tonhalle, Victoria Hall Geneva, London's Wigmore Hall, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Teatro Teresa Carreño Caracas, the Teatro Coliseo Buenos Aires, the QPAC Brisbane or the National Centre for the Performing Arts Beijing.

In performances of triple concertos, the Swiss Piano Trio performs as a soloists' ensemble together with orchestras such as the Russian National Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège, the National Symphony Orchestra Ukraine, the Queensland Orchestra Brisbane, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra and many more. The ensemble regularly follows invitations to renowned festivals such as the Menuhin Festival Gstaad, Ottawa Chamberfest, Canberra International Music Festival, Esbjerg International Chamber Music Festival and the Kammermusikfestival Schloss Laudon in Vienna. Moreover the Swiss Piano Trio gives master classes in many countries.

Numerous radio, television and CD recordings with works by Mozart, Mendelssohn, Robert and Clara Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák and Eduard Franck as well as piano trios by the Swiss composers Paul Juon, Frank Martin and Daniel Schnyder document the artistic activities of the ensemble. Since 2010, the Swiss Piano Trio issues its recordings on audite. All previously released recordings received several awards and distinctions.

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Swiss Piano Trio, the festival KAMMERMUSIK BODENSEE was created in 2008. Its artistic director is the pianist of the ensemble, Martin Lucas Staub.

ZURICH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Founded in 1945 by Edmond de Stoutz, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra is now one of the leading ensembles of its kind. Under the direction of Edmond de Stoutz and later Howard Griffiths and Muhai Tang, the orchestra won international recognition. During the years under Sir Roger Norrington from 2011 to 2015, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra did much to establish and enhance its excellent reputation. Since the 2016/17 season the orchestra is led for the first time not by a conductor but, in the person of Daniel Hope, by an instrumentalist.

Regular invitations to international festivals, performances in Europe's leading centres of music, concert tours on almost all continents and numerous critically acclaimed CD releases testify to the worldwide renown of the Zurich Chamber Orchestra. In 2017 two of the orchestra's CD-releases were honoured with an «Echo Klassik».

The repertoire is broadly based, extending from the Baroque through the Classical and Romantic eras to the present day. The orchestra is also notable for its work with musicians from other fields such as jazz, folk music and popular entertainment. Outreach work with children and young people and encouragement of young instrumentalists are as important to the Zurich Chamber Orchestra as its close and continuing collaboration with renowned soloists.



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