



Ludwig van Beethoven: Complete Works for Piano Trio - Vol. 1

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Gramophone (Nalen Anthoni - 2015.04.01)

GRAMOPHONE

Instruments are carefully balanced, sound is good. But this recording, originally in SACD format, would audibly have been a lot finer if it hadn't been downsampled to CD. Yet an elevated standard of musicianship shines through, revealing the Swiss Piano Trio to be a redoubtable team. Perhaps the opening Allegro of Op 1 No 1 might have benefited from a slightly slower tempo but that's soon forgotten as a considerate emphasis on modulations and changes in character emerge unobtrusively. Similarly the second movement, a touch quick for Adagio cantabile, is nonetheless yieldingly flexible, the melancholy implicit in the switch from A flat major to tonic minor (2'56") keenly felt.

A wider range of expressive possibilities in interpretation arise in Op 97, the first movement teeming with intensity, an Allegro that pushes the envelope beyond the moderato also specified. But there is no sense of haste either here or in the Scherzo, fierily forward-looking yet sensitive to the tenebrous tone of the B flat minor Trio, the long repeat properly observed. Invidious though it may be to single him out, pianist Martin Lucas Staub's leadership tells everywhere and has also to be credited for the charged emotional motivation of the slow movement; while the directions Allegro moderato followed by Presto in the finale are judged, and contrasted, to a nicety. For a more contemplative Archduke turn to Martin Roscoe and Co. But there is no gainsaying that this new performance is, on its chosen terms, equally formidable.