

audite

Complete Works for Piano Trio Vol. VI



SWISS
PIANO TRIO

BEETHOVEN

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN****Piano Trio in E-flat major, Op. 63**

(after String Quintet, Op. 4)

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| I. Allegro con brio | 10:44 |
| II. Andante | 7:16 |
| III. Menuetto. Più allegretto – Trio I and Trio II | 6:08 |
| IV. Finale. Presto | 6:22 |

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36

(version for Piano Trio)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| I. Adagio – Allegro con brio | 13:14 |
| II. Larghetto quasi andante | 10:55 |
| III. Scherzo. Allegro | 3:42 |
| IV. Allegro molto | 6:47 |

SCHWEIZER
KLAVERTRIO



SWISS
PIANO TRIO

Angela Golubeva, violin

Joël Marosi, cello

Martin Lucas Staub, piano

Recording the complete works for Piano Trio by Beethoven for audite

Since January 2015, the Swiss Piano Trio have been working on their most significant CD project to date, recording the complete works for piano trio by Ludwig van Beethoven. This release reveals 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 have also recorded 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, it is our philosophy to present on each volume a diverse combination of early and later works as well as the variations: each album becomes an exciting concert programme in its own right, allowing the listener directly to compare Beethoven's different creative periods.

After the successful release of Vol. V the series was complete – or so we thought. In the spring of the Beethoven anniversary year of 2020, the Swiss Piano Trio were to have performed several concert cycles, including the complete works for piano trio by Beethoven. Due to the corona crisis, however, the world came to a standstill and all concerts had to be cancelled.

In that situation, I remembered that in 1806 Beethoven had published an adaptation for piano trio of his Symphony No. 2, Op. 36. I had had the music on the shelf at home for a while. When playing it through for the first time, my initial scepticism soon gave way to a great enthusiasm for this music and admiration for this convincing transformation of a symphonic work into a piano trio. This music, full of *joie de vivre* and belief in the future, seemed to us to be the right response to the pause in live performances, and so the idea was born to supplement our five-part complete recording with a previously unscheduled sixth volume presenting this symphony played by the three of us.

Sophisticated piano writing and an ingenious distribution of the orchestral parts amongst the three instruments creates an effective chamber music dialogue. At the same time, concentrating on the essentials produces a symphonic piano trio of real Beethovenian radicalism. There is not a note too many, nor too few. The style of this adaptation also suggests that Beethoven was most probably its author, or at least that he was heavily involved in its genesis.

1806 also saw the publication of an adaptation of Beethoven's String Quintet, Op. 4, for piano trio (Op. 63), thought to have been produced by the composer himself. It therefore seemed natural to combine these two works. Stylistically, the work seems to date from Beethoven's early period; however, some of the piano passages with chords and arpeggios in the low bass register bespeak the later date of 1806 as the origin of this arrangement. The fact that due to the source situation Beethoven's authorship can neither be completely confirmed nor unequivocally refuted does not negate the effect of this music: this is real, quintessential Beethoven, surprising as well as brilliant.

It therefore became clear that Vol. VI would be an unexpected contribution to the Beethoven anniversary year, featuring two seldom played rarities. The fact that the Swiss Piano Trio's Beethoven series thus becomes the most complete commercially available collection of his works for piano trio is a lovely side effect. For the Swiss Piano Trio's main endeavour is not an encyclopaedic one, but rather the love and enjoyment of Beethoven's inexhaustible wealth of ideas and his music which remains extremely fresh to the present day.

Ludwig van Beethoven:**Piano Trio in E-flat major, Op. 63** (after String Quintet, Op. 4)**Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36** (version for Piano Trio)

It was famous composers in particular who, from the establishment of the modern music trade in the eighteenth century, had to accept a circumstance which, even if it flattered their egos, had a detrimental effect on their commercial success. For the popularity of their names tempted publishers either to reprint their works without authorisation, or, in their names to issue works, or arrangements of their works, which they had not written. Nowadays, it would be incredibly difficult and risky to adorn oneself with borrowed plumes. International copyright penalises such practices with painful fines; this, however, only came into effect in 1886 with the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, marking the beginning of international (although still not harmonised) regulation of copyright in music. It was from 1795 at the latest that Beethoven became familiar with the consequences of insufficient control over the distribution of a composer's works, when everyone was talking about him following his successful debut in Vienna with the Piano Trios Op. 1. Luckily for him, his younger brother, Kaspar Karl (1774-1815), also relocated to Vienna: together they made, over many years, an enterprising team not shy of conflict. Beethoven had no qualms taking legal action against the publisher Artaria in 1803 who had printed his String Quintet, Op. 29, without his knowledge, which Beethoven had already sold to Breitkopf & Härtel. On the other side, Beethoven also profited from the non-transparent legal position when he played publishers off against each other in order to achieve higher selling prices for new works. And yet both sides benefitted from a profitable win-win situation thanks to the high demand for sheet music for domestic music-making. Repurposing larger-scale instrumental works was a widespread practice: often, they were arranged for piano (two as well as four hands), for chamber formations with piano, and for all conceivable combinations of strings and/or wind instruments from duos through to octets. (One should not forget that for a long time, such arrangements represented the only opportunity outside live concerts to play and listen to orchestral works.) Here, the commercial success was also increased if the publisher was able to advertise an adaptation prepared or authorised by the composer. Owing to his enormous productivity and wearing way of working, however, Beethoven was reluctant to produce chamber music versions of his symphonies. Instead, he happily relinquished these tasks to talented pupils, such as Ferdinand Ries, or younger colleagues such as Johann Nepomuk Hummel: Beethoven therefore occasionally lost track of which of his works appeared with which publisher and in which format. Amongst these were his Piano Trio Op. 63 and the Cello Sonata Op. 64, whose opus numbers had been assigned by the publisher without Beethoven's assistance, closing the numerical gap between the Overture to *Coriolanus*, Op. 62, and the Scena and Aria for Soprano, *Ah! Perfido*, Op. 65.

First issued by Artaria in 1806, both works are adaptations of earlier works – Op. 63 harks back to the String Quintet Op. 4 of 1794, and Op. 64 to the String Trio Op. 3, No. 1 of 1795. The assumption that the arrangement is not Beethoven's own or unauthorised by him, since the publisher would otherwise have advertised this, is of course a hasty one. Most probably Beethoven would have intervened against a version that he had not authorised and, more importantly, which did not live up to his artistic standards. (The undeniable quality of the adaptation of Op. 63 has led to the assumption that its author might have been the pianist and piano pedagogue Franz Xaver Kleinheinz (1765-1832), with whom Beethoven had become acquainted in 1799.) The title page of the printed edition of Op. 63 bears the inscription: "GRANDE SONATE / pour le Forte-Piano / avec Violon et Basse obligée / tirée du Grand Quintetto Op. 4 / composée / par LOUIS van BEETHOVEN". This wording is puzzling since there is no mention of a piano trio, but of a piano sonata with accompaniment by two prescribed string instruments. The title refers to the dominant position held by the piano within Viennese classical music (Mozart still referred to his violin sonatas as sonatas for piano with obbligato violin) and the baroque basso continuo tradition which does not require "obligatory" instruments. Opus 4, to which the title refers, is itself a revision (definitely from Beethoven's own pen) of an earlier work, so that we have a case of multiple recycling. The

work in question was the Octet Op. 103: despite the high opus number, which was assigned posthumously, it was written towards the end of Beethoven's Bonn period, shortly before he moved to Vienna in 1792. When we listen to Op. 63, the musical recycling will surely not be a cause for irritation, for Beethoven's compositional thumbprint is already unmistakable, as for instance in the expressive weight of the slow movement and the rhythmic animation of the themes. And in the scherzo, a phrasing unambiguously emerges which seems like a form of blueprint for the famous timpani theme in the scherzo of the Ninth Symphony.

In the case of the piano trio version of the Second Symphony, Op. 36, the situation is even more complex. Recordings of the work tend to name the composer as the author of the adaptation, referring to the title of the first print of 1806: "Deuxième / GRANDE SINFONIE / de Louis van Beethoven, / arrangée en Trio pour / Pianoforte, Violon et Violoncelle / par l'Auteur même". The Kinsky-Halm Catalogue points out, however, that the *Wiener Zeitung* announced the edition of this version on 13 August 1806, adding "Ouvrage révu & corrigé par l'Auteur même", and that Carl Czerny wrote in his memoirs of Beethoven, published in 1852, that this piece was an "arrangement" by Ferdinand Ries: "Beethoven gave it to me to change various things with which he was not content." Op. 36 is also absent from Ries' list of Beethoven's own adaptations of his works. To what extent Beethoven advised, corrected and shaped the adaptation is impossible to ascertain, not least because the phenomenon of unconscious imitation (assimilation) of a teacher's style by his pupils also needs to be taken into account. On the basis of Ries' and Czerny's familiarity with Beethoven's musical thinking one certainly has to award the arrangement with a high degree of stylistic authenticity, for it convincingly realises not only Beethoven's prismatic writing (which is far bolder than Haydn's symphonic style) but also his innovative, vivid and subtle instrumentation. This applies particularly to the diverse duties assigned to the piano, which has to take on not only the writing for the strings but also the expressive wind parts, representing an orchestra *en miniature*, whilst the violin and the cello play the – often contrapuntally conceived – contours of the bass and melody lines.

With good reason, Beethoven was very proud of his Symphony No. 2, as becomes clear in a letter of 28 March 1802, written by his brother to Breitkopf & Härtel: "Furthermore, in three to four weeks, we will have a great symphony and a concerto for the piano. I would like to ask you, at some point, to give me your opinion about these latter two pieces, but about the former one I would like you to hurry a little as we would like to see it printed soon, for it is one of my brother's most exquisite works." The hurry was due to a planned academy concert by Beethoven, in preparation for which he had asked Ries to proofread the orchestral parts. In the event, no suitable hall was available so that the concert could not go ahead as initially planned: the public premiere of Beethoven's Second Symphony did not take place until 5 April 1803, when it was performed alongside his Third Piano Concerto, Op. 37 (with Beethoven himself playing the solo part), the oratorio *Christus am Ölberge*, Op. 85, and the Symphony No. 1, Op. 21. The impact of his new symphony, dedicated to his benefactor, Prince Lichnowsky, must have been enormous. According to the reviewer of the *Leipziger Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, writing at the occasion of the publication of the score in 1804, the Second Symphony was "a curious, colossal work, displaying depth, strength and artistry as few others: of a complexity in intent and execution, both on the part of the composer and the large-scale orchestra (which it certainly demands), as surely no other symphony known thus far." The magnificent version for piano trio calls to mind the rank of the piece which, however, was eclipsed by the *Eroica* soon afterwards: even today it has not managed to emerge fully from the shadow of the latter symphony. One can therefore but concur with the conclusion of the Frankfurt musicologist Adolf Nowak, who suggested that Beethoven's compositional aim in his Symphony No. 2 was to achieve "liberation" – a liberation from stylistic norms, now replaced by the mysterious logic of an autonomous creative language.

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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.

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stereo & surround
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recording:

June 20 - 22, 2020 (Op. 63)

July 6 - 8, 2020 (Op. 36)

recording location:

Kunsthalle Ziegelhütte, Appenzell, Switzerland

equipment:

Schoeps MK2S + MK4

Sennheiser MKH 20 + MKH 8040,

Neumann U87

RME mic-amplifier octamic XTC, Sequoia 15

PMC TB 2 S-A, Jecklin headphones

recording format:

PCM 96kHz, 24 bit

recording producer:

Dipl.-Tonmeister Bernhard Hanke

executive producer:

Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff

piano technician:

Pascal Monti, m-fréquence

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Neda Navae, Berlin

art direction and design:

AB-Design

This recording was supported by

- Heinrich Gebert Kulturstiftung Appenzell
- Myriam Gebert
- Stiftung Beatrice and Marcel Fuchs
- Gönnerverein Schweizer Klaviertrio

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