



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Complete Works for Piano Trio

Van Baerle Trio



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Van Baerle Trio

Hannes Minnaar piano

Maria Milstein violin

Gideon den Herder violoncello

Residentie Orkest The Hague

Jan Willem de Vriend conductor

CD 1

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Piano Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 1 No. 1

[1] Allegro	9:40
[2] Adagio cantabile	6:56
[3] Scherzo. Allegro assai	5:05
[4] Finale. Presto	7:36

Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 1 No. 3

[5] Allegro con brio	9:49
[6] Andante cantabile con Variazioni	7:30
[7] Menuetto. Quasi Allegro	4:25
[8] Finale. Prestissimo	8:23

Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 11

[9] Allegro con brio	8:56
[10] Adagio	4:45
[11] Allegretto con Variazioni. Thema: Pria ch'io l'impegno	6:37

Total time 79:50

CD 2

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Piano Trio in G Major, Op. 1 No. 2

[1] Adagio – Allegro vivace	11:38
[2] Largo con espressione	9:44
[3] Scherzo. Allegro	3:58
[4] Finale. Presto	7:51

Piano Trio after the Symphony in D Major, Op. 36

[5] Adagio – Allegro con brio	12:56
[6] Larghetto quasi andante	11:35
[7] Scherzo	4:41
[8] Allegro molto	6:54

[9] Allegretto in E-flat Major, Hess 48	3:14
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Total time 72:37

CD 3

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Piano Trio in D Major, Op. 70 No. 1

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|-----|---------------------------|--------------|
| [1] | Allegro vivace e con brio | 10:34 |
| [2] | Largo assai ed espressivo | 9:02 |
| [3] | Presto | 8:26 |

Piano Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 70 No. 2

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| [4] | Poco sostenuto – Allegro ma non troppo | 10:34 |
| [5] | Allegretto | 4:59 |
| [6] | Allegretto ma non troppo | 8:57 |
| [7] | Finale. Allegro | 7:50 |

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| [8] | Variations in E-flat Major, Op. 44 | 11:53 |
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Total time 72:20

CD 4

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97 'Archduke'

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|-----|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| [1] | Allegro moderato | 12:57 |
| [2] | Scherzo. Allegro | 10:37 |
| [3] | Andante cantabile, ma però con moto | 11:01 |
| [4] | Allegro moderato | 7:11 |

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| [5] | Allegretto in B-flat Major, WoO 39 | 5:26 |
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Piano Trio in E-flat Major, WoO 38

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| [6] | Allegro moderato | 4:34 |
| [7] | Scherzo. Allegro ma non troppo | 4:58 |
| [8] | Rondo. Allegretto | 5:12 |

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| [9] | Variations on 'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu', Op. 121a | 16:50 |
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Total time 78:52

CD 5

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Concerto in C Major for Pianoforte, Violin, Violoncello and Orchestra, Op. 56 'Triple Concerto'

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|------------------------|-------|
| [1] Allegro | 17:13 |
| [2] Largo – | 4:06 |
| [3] Rondo alla Polacca | 13:12 |

Piano Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 38 after the Septet, Op. 20

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|---|------|
| [4] Adagio – Allegro con brio | 9:40 |
| [5] Adagio cantabile | 7:31 |
| [6] Tempo di Menuetto | 3:30 |
| [7] Andante con Variazioni | 7:07 |
| [8] Scherzo. Allegro molto e vivace | 3:48 |
| [9] Andante con moto alla Marcia – Presto | 7:03 |

Total time 73:15

Beethoven — Complete Works for Piano Trio

Volume 1: Op. 1 Nos. 1 & 3, Op. 11

When Beethoven left Bonn for Vienna in 1792 he was already an experienced composer: his first published composition, the *Dressler Variations* WoO 63, was issued in 1782, followed the next year by a set of three Piano Sonatas now known as WoO 47 and some minor works, and, in 1791, by the virtuosic *Righini Variations* WoO 65. These early publications were only the tip of the iceberg, and there is evidence that during his time in Bonn he composed in a wide variety of genres, including concertos, cantatas, and chamber music. Nevertheless, many of the works that Beethoven had finished before his arrival in Vienna remained unpublished until after his death.

Beethoven's primary reason for settling in Vienna was to study with Joseph Haydn, who at the time was widely considered the greatest living composer. The lessons continued until 1794, when Haydn left the Austrian capital for England, which caused Beethoven to take up tuition with Johann Georg Albrechtsberger. Though he had previously taken lessons with two other teachers (including Christian Gottlob Neefe in Bonn), Beethoven evidently considered Haydn to be the most important of his teachers. This is evident in the fact that Haydn was the only one of Beethoven's early teachers to receive a work dedicated to him, namely the *Piano Sonatas op. 2*.

Before that, however, Beethoven's three *Piano Trios op. 1* were the first compositions that he deemed important enough to give an opus number. They were dedicated to Prince Karl Lichnowsky, a patron of Beethoven in whose house he lived for some

time. Prince Lichnowsky also helped subsidise the first edition of these pieces, and hosted the first performance of the trios at one of his weekly house concerts. This close connection provided Beethoven with opportunities to associate himself with members of the Austrian nobility (indeed, some thought Beethoven was of noble birth because of the prefix 'van' or 'von'), and allowed Beethoven greater access to future patrons and supporters than he would otherwise have had.

According to Beethoven's lifelong friend Ferdinand Ries, Haydn was complimentary about the set of trios, but advised against publishing the third one in C minor, supposedly because he thought that it would not be well received by the public. It is difficult to say whether Haydn was right in the short term, as the first review of these pieces seems to have appeared more than a decade after their first publication. Nevertheless, unlike its siblings, the C minor trio was later arranged for string quintet and published as Beethoven's *op. 103*, so it seems that, at least in the long run, the public had no difficulty appreciating this trio.

The trios combine various elements that would have been familiar to Beethoven's contemporaries. The first, for instance, opens with a chord followed by a so-called Mannheim rocket: an upwardly broken chord that had been so commonly used by composers in mid-eighteenth-century Mannheim that it acquired the name of that school of composition. Less familiar, however, would be the fact that the trios contain four movements rather than the three that had been traditional in this genre. This implicitly links these trios to the genre of the symphony, in which four-movement structures had been common for some time. Here too Beethoven puts his own spin on things. In the first trio, for instance, he includes a faster scherzo-

like movement instead of the more traditional minuet. The third trio is perhaps more traditional, as it contains a minuet as a third movement, though it does have other qualities that we would now consider typically Beethovenian (which might shine a light on why Haydn may have advised against its publication). One such characteristic is the path from C minor to C major in the finale, a progression well associated with two of his most famous works, the *Fifth Symphony* and the *Third Piano Concerto*, but already present in the lesser-known *Dressler Variations* mentioned above.

Although changes from major to minor had been common in the music of previous generations, where they would normally apply to just the last chord, Beethoven employs this technique more extensively here than was probably common at that time. Another typical Beethovenian feature is the fact that, in both the first and the third trio from this set, the composer has tried to unify these pieces by linking the outer movements with similar motives: the C to E flat that opens the first movement of the third trio is also found extensively in the finale, and the same can be said for the opening G to B-flat leap in the finale of *no. 1*, which recalls the previously mentioned Mannheim rocket that opens the first movement.

Much like *op. 1*, the trio *op. 11* is also connected to the Viennese nobility of the time. Beethoven cleverly dedicated it to Maria Wilhelmine Countess of Thun-Hohenstein, who had patronized Mozart. In other ways too, Beethoven tried to make this a particularly attractive publication for the Viennese public: the trio could be performed with a clarinet instead of a violin, a flexible approach to instrumentation that would doubtless increase its marketability, and that he would later employ in

his now almost completely unknown settings of folk melodies. In addition, the last movement consists of a theme from Joseph Weigl's comic opera *L'amor marinaro*, followed by a series of variations. At the time when Beethoven wrote this trio, between 1797 and 1798, Weigl's opera was very popular in Vienna, and it would go on to be staged in a number of other places too. Beethoven could therefore safely assume that the somewhat whimsical theme of the last movement, taken from an aria about breakfast sung by the character of a perpetually hungry music teacher, would be well known to a substantial part of his audience. The nine variations are, in Czerny's words, 'written with all the spirit which Beethoven could so well command for any known theme.'

Volume 2: Op. 1 No. 2, Op. 36, Hess 48

'No company of musicians and friends of art can be indifferent to the appearance of a second symphony by Beethoven. (...) It is a curiously colossal work, with a depth, power, and erudite artistry as few others; of a difficulty in design and execution ... as certainly none of the symphonies known thus far.' These are the words with which the reviewer of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* described Beethoven's *Second Symphony* in May 1804, which had been published at the end of the previous year. Although many of Beethoven's works had been greeted with similar descriptions of how extraordinary they were — perhaps most notably the violin sonatas — compared to Beethoven's first contribution in this genre the *Second Symphony* is definitely a step up in terms of scope, duration, and difficulty.

Much like in the *First Symphony*, the first movement of the *Second* opens with a slow introduction. Whereas in the *First Symphony* this slow section was largely an

extension of a single cadence, here it is extended far beyond that, and has acquired some of the characteristics of an overture. This opening serves to counterbalance the following *Allegro con brio*, which as the reviews indicate must have sounded like something of a force of nature to its first listeners. The second movement has a much calmer atmosphere and slower tempo that seems to call back to the opening of the symphony. Attentive listeners will also recognise some thematic similarities with the second movement of the *Piano Sonata op. 28*, which Beethoven may have been working on at the same time. The third movement is a very witty and light-footed scherzo and trio that provides a pleasant palate-cleanser before the boisterous fourth movement. Some have argued that the opening theme of the finale was intended as a hidden reference to the composer's gastric problems, based on its quirky jumps, but there is no corroborating evidence for that supposition. Towards the end, the movement contains what appears to be a brief foreshadowing of the choral finale of the *Ninth Symphony*, before delivering what can best be described as a comical sucker-punch that finishes one of Beethoven's most cheerful compositions. It must be said that Beethoven's good mood was short-lived: a few months after completing the *Second Symphony*, he fell into a deep depression that led him to write his famous Heiligenstadt Testament, in which he expressed despair at the prospect of having to live with encroaching deafness.

Chamber music arrangements of symphonies were very common at the time in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and it is probably true that a large proportion of the people who were familiar with the symphonic repertoire at the time were so because of them. The *Second Symphony* is the only one for which

Beethoven himself produced an arrangement, although there is evidence that his student Ferdinand Ries did the bulk of the work, with Beethoven adding the finishing touches. It is of course inevitable that some of the subtleties of Beethoven's orchestral instrumentation are lost, but a contemporary critic in the *AmZ* thought that it was overall an impressive arrangement with a balanced role for all three instruments. The only major criticism was that the arrangement was extraordinarily difficult to play, but that only seems appropriate, since the same was said about the original instrumentation.

Of the three *Piano Trios* published under *op. 1*, the second announces its pretensions to the symphonic genre earlier than its siblings, as it is the only one to open with a slow introduction, at that time a feature still most commonly associated with symphonies. The opening of the *Second Symphony*, which Beethoven composed more than half a decade later and with which it has some similarities, never seems far away, and some figurative similarities hint at an underlying connection. The *Allegro vivace* that follows is perhaps a little more whimsical than the equivalent section in the symphony: the first theme seems to do its best to escape the primary tonality for about as long as Beethoven probably felt he could get away with, and the second theme has a particular teasing quality. The slow second movement reveals its power only gradually, when it transpires that the opening theme is the source of almost everything that follows, resulting in an extremely unified movement. The third movement is almost always indicated as a scherzo, but it seems much more like a minuet than the equivalent movement in the *Second Symphony*, with which — much like in the introduction of the first movement — it shares some motivic similarity. A possible explanation for this is found in the

sketches for this movement that identify it as a minuet, which survives in the violin part of the first edition. The final movement also underwent a transformation: as Beethoven's friend Franz Gerhard Wegeler would relate later, after an early run-through with the cellist Antonin Kraft Beethoven was persuaded to change the metre of the whole movement. Although this version of the finale is shorter in time than either of the first two movements and perhaps less orchestral in conception, it covers a lot of ground and ends the *Trio* with much wit and power. Towards the end there is also a short guest appearance in the piano part of some material that would later end up in the first movement of the *Piano Sonata op. 14 no. 2* in the same key.

The *Allegretto in E-flat Hess 48* probably was one of the first works for piano trio that Beethoven wrote, dating back to the early 1790s. It was also one of the last to be published, as it was not discovered until the mid-twentieth century when a more or less complete *Allegretto* was found in a collection of early sketches, along with an incomplete trio section. Originally, the *Allegretto* and trio might have been intended as a third movement of a large four movement structure, similar to the *op. 1* trios, but Beethoven evidently abandoned the plan halfway. Nevertheless, the *Allegretto* in its current form is a short but humorous conversation between three different instruments.

Volume 3: Op. 70 Nos. 1 & 2, Op. 44

The year 1808 was a period of superlative productivity for Beethoven: he had finished his *Fifth Symphony* in March, and the *Sixth* by September. Both symphonies would receive their premiers on 22 December 1808, during one of the most

extraordinary concerts in history. In addition to the symphonies, it included the *Fourth Piano Concerto*, two parts from the *Mass in C op. 86*, an extemporized piano fantasy, the concert aria *Ah perfido! op. 65*, and the *Choral Fantasy op. 80* that was especially composed for that occasion. The enormous programme ensured that the whole concert lasted about four hours.

In the midst of all this, Beethoven somehow found the time and energy to compose two major piano trios. They are first mentioned in a letter from the end of July; the first was finished by the middle of September, and the second probably around a month later. They were completed while Beethoven was living with Countess Marie Erdödy, to whom the trios were also dedicated. The fact that she was separated from her husband at this time has fuelled much colourful speculation about whether she might have had a romantic relationship with the composer, but reliable evidence for that is lacking.

Some previous piano trios were rather lengthy affairs with pretensions to the symphonic repertoire — particularly *op. 1 no. 2*, which can be found on vol. 2 — but the opening movement of *op. 70 no. 1* immediately lets the listener know that this time, things are different. Rather than beginning with a slow section that serves as a preparation for the fast movement, the piece starts seemingly *in medias res* with a tempestuous figure in all three instruments at the same time. What follows is an unusually unified but complex movement, in which on a first listening the second theme barely plays a role at all. A closer hearing however — in addition to the repeat of the exposition, the development and recapitulation together are also repeated

— provides a chance to appreciate quite how cleverly Beethoven uses a kind of motivic transformation in order to relate the themes to each other.

The second movement is the one that gave the trio its nickname ‘ghost’. Carl Czerny, Beethoven’s student, seems to have been the first to use this name. According to him, the movement ‘resembles an appearance from the underworld. One could think not inappropriately of the first appearance of the ghost in Hamlet’. Whether Beethoven thought about it in the same way is hard to say, but the description seems to fit the overall mood of the movement rather well. The finale, by contrast, is much more light-footed, and brings the piece to an exuberant end.

Superficially, the sibling of the ‘Ghost’ may seem closer to Haydn and Mozart in style. The slow opening makes a return appearance (although it starts with a cello solo rather than a chord), and most of the first movement sounds much more Haydnesque than the equivalent in *no. 1*, the cheerful straightforwardness of the first theme in particular. But just like in the earlier trios, Beethoven puts some distance between him and his former teacher, who at this point was still alive: the second theme turns out to be based on the slow opening solo, but the slow introduction also makes its reappearance at the end of the movement. Well-informed listeners might recognise that last feature is a call back to the first time that Beethoven repeated a slow section in a sonata form — in an early piano sonata from 1783, long before either Haydn or Mozart would do something similar — but whether Haydn himself would have been among them is debatable.

The opening of the second movement is also reminiscent of earlier repertoire, with a simple *Allegretto* theme presented in C major. But the sudden entrance of a second theme in C minor disturbs the peace, and the following variations alternate between the two themes. The ending, during which the opening material sounds in the minor key, inverts the well-known Beethovenian trajectory from C minor to major (as found for instance at the end of *op. 1 no. 3* on vol. 1 of this set). The third movement, an *Allegretto ma non troppo*, was described by an attendee of the first performance of both trios on New Year's Eve 1808 as 'the loveliest and most graceful I have ever heard; it exalts and melts my soul whenever I think of it', and it does not seem to have lost its power in two centuries.

The lively finale begins reminiscent of the principle theme of the first movement, but threatens to derail itself early on in a passage in which the piano and the violin almost modulate to C minor, and it is up to the cello to pull away to a more moderate G major for the second theme. The minor key, however, remains threatening on the horizon as a lingering spirit, until an extended passage in C major makes the way free for a brilliant ending in the home key of E-flat.

For a long time, the *Variations op. 44* were known as '*Variations on an Original Theme*', as the first publication did not name the theme. It has since been identified as a theme by Dittersdorf, the same composer who provided the theme for Beethoven's first ever published composition, from the aria '*Ja, ich muss mich von ihr scheiden*' in the second act of his opera *Das rothe Käppchen*. The variations were probably written in 1792, when Dittersdorf's opera was being staged in Bonn, and published in 1804 when various other early works were being offered to publishers.

The set can be seen as a preparation for the last movement of the trio *op. 11*, which also features a popular operatic theme that is transformed several times. In both sets, six variations in the major key are followed by a slow one in minor, which traditionally serves as a kind of springboard for the finale. In *op. 44*, however, Beethoven follows this with another slow variation in major, and then transitions back into the first tempo before subsiding back into a slow and scary minor variation. The finale that follows simultaneously acknowledges this expanded structure, while also seemingly paying homage to Mozart, who had passed away in 1791 and with whom Beethoven tried to take lessons. After a humorous *Allegro*, the previous minor variation returns, but not for long: the journey back to the home key — normally a big deal for Beethoven! — is done with a kind of Mozartian effortlessness, leading to a delightfully teasing statement of the theme, before a boisterous ending.

Volume 4: Op. 97, WoO 39, WoO 38, Op. 121a

Beethoven's most famous piano trio is dedicated to the Archduke Rudolph, himself an accomplished musician. The importance of Rudolph as a patron can be seen by the number of other prominent works that Beethoven dedicated to him, which included the *Fourth* and *Fifth Piano Concertos*, the opera *Fidelio*, the '*Hammerklavier*' *Sonata*, the *Missa Solemnis*, and the *Große Fuge*. The '*Archduke*' *Trio* constitutes Beethoven's last completed large scale contribution to this genre, and like many of the other works dedicated to Rudolph it is something of a crowning achievement.

Beethoven started work on the trio in the second half of 1810, but much of the work was done in March of the next year, as dates on the autograph score and a series of letters to Rudolph indicate. Despite this, the first edition did not come out until September 1816, but by this time Beethoven had already played it twice in public in the spring of 1814. Reports of those performances generally focussed on the composer's lack of hearing obstructing his playing, and after these concerts Beethoven withdrew from the public platform. But some descriptions give an inkling of how novel a composition this was perceived to be, and a young Ignaz Moscheles reported that 'In the case of how many compositions is the word "new" misapplied! But never in Beethoven's, and least of all in this, which again is full of originality.'

This originality is perhaps not immediately obvious in the first movement, which on the whole is rather spaciouly set up and hides a sophisticated harmonic plan with links to the other three movements. The principal theme, described by Carl Czerny as 'noble and important', acquires depth during the movement, despite being initially presented without any introduction whatsoever by the piano, and simply calmly repeated by the violin. Its sibling, the second theme presented in G major instead of the expected F major, is likewise gallant, and the similarities and differences between the two themes are constantly explored throughout the movement, most prominently in the extended development section, as well as the sophisticated recapitulation and coda. The scherzo second movement is much more immediate in its effect, and the tone is set when the cello opens with a rather jolly theme, with the violin joining in four bars later. Although one might expect the piano to also take up this theme, the strings remain on their own for 15 bars, long enough that attendees of the first performance might have begun

to suspect a comical error on the part of the pianist. The trio section that follows is one of the most peculiar that Beethoven ever wrote, as it opens with the cello playing a chromatic theme, seemingly without metre, and without clear contours. This puzzling collection of notes develops into a fugato when it occurs in the piano and the violin, but the piano interrupts it three times with an exuberant waltz, each in a different key until the home key makes a return, and with it the material of the scherzo. The coda briefly brings the fugato back, but the opening theme returns and slams the door shut.

The slow movement introduces a profound theme that has been linked to the 23rd *Righini Variation (WoO 65)* and the second movement of the *Piano Sonata op. 2 no. 2*, as all three of them feature slow themes in D major in 3/4 metre starting on an F-sharp. The four variations that follow slowly increase the intensity with increasingly elaborate figurations, until the texture thins out with the return of a modified and more troubled version of the opening theme in the fifth variation. Through subtle thematic transformations, the opening mood is returned to, and the movement ends serenely. The finale humorously incorporates this calm ending into its principal rondo theme, and its extended coda in particular is something of a treasure trove of witty surprises: starting in A major, the 'wrong' key for the coda, the strings take up a modified version of the principal theme, while the piano seems to reminisce about the dance music from the second movement, albeit in a starkly modified form. This daydream is violently disturbed by a move back to B-flat initiated by a diminished chord hitting like a bolt from the blue. The jolliness soon returns, and the trio ends with a kind of stop-and-start joke typical of Beethoven's teacher Haydn, who had passed away in 1809.

A year after the *'Archduke'*, Beethoven wrote another piano trio in B-flat major. The autograph dates it 26 June 1812, but besides the similarity in key it is different in every way. It only has a single movement, was not published during the composer's lifetime, and was written to encourage the nine-year-old Maximiliane Brentano in her piano playing. Her mother Antonie has been identified as the likely intended recipient of the famous 'Immortal Beloved' letter, which Beethoven wrote only ten days after this trio. Since it is unknown when Antonie and Beethoven first met, some scholars have speculated that Maximiliane might have been the composer's daughter, which would give this piece special significance.

The trio itself is a fairly straightforward *Allegretto* in sonata form, and the technical demands of the three parts remain far below what is found in Beethoven's other chamber music. This is obviously to accommodate the limited capabilities of the young Maximiliane, for whom Beethoven also provided extended fingerings in the autograph. Despite these limitations, there are passages in this trio which seem reminiscent of the *'Archduke'* — the trill passage in the coda seems strikingly similar to that in the finale of the other trio — and Beethoven may have tried to bolster the success of this educational exercise by subtly linking it to a piece that Maximiliane might want to play in the future. Whether that strategy worked is hard to say, but years later she received the dedication of the *Piano Sonata op. 109*, although it is not clear if she ever played it.

The *Trio in E-flat WoO 38* might have been once intended to be part of *op. 1* (see vols. 1 & 2), and although there are no extant sketches to support this, the style of the composition makes a dating of around 1790-1 plausible. At this time,

Beethoven was still experimenting with different aspects of the form of the piano trio, and was still thinking of a three movement form, albeit with a scherzo in the place of the more common slow movement. Although Beethoven evidently decided against publishing it, the trio contains some surprising twists and turns, particularly in its lengthy codas.

The last piece for piano trio that Beethoven published during his lifetime has one of the longest compositional histories of all of his works. It consists of a long introduction, followed by ten variations on *'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu'* from Wilhelm Müller's popular opera *Die Schwestern von Prag*. The first version of this piece was probably composed between 1801 and 1803, but it was substantially revised in 1816, and most likely further revised before publication in 1824. The lengthy opening seems reminiscent of the beginning of *op. 1 no. 2* (see vol. 2), but what follows seems have some kinship with *op. 11* (vol. 1) and *44* (vol. 3), which were also based on popular operatic themes. The tenth and last variation was probably most heavily revised, as it includes a double fugue of considerable sophistication, which some scholars have compared to similar passages in the *Diabelli Variations* and the finale of the *Ninth Symphony*. This final trio therefore includes elements from Beethoven's early, middle, and late styles.

Volume 5: Op. 38, Op. 56

In 1799, after having made a name for himself with major compositions in the genres of the piano trio, piano sonata, violin sonata, and string quartet, but before finishing his *First Symphony*, Beethoven wrote a work for mixed strings and winds. This piece, the *Septet op. 20*, would become one of his most popular compositions, with a large

number of arrangements, including the one for piano trio on this disc. Nevertheless, for a variety of complex reasons the composition would also become something of a sensitive topic for Beethoven: not only would its continued popularity overshadow some of his later works, but it would also remind him of failed attempts to cure his hearing loss.

The instrumentation of the *Septet*—clarinet, horn, bassoon, violin, viola, cello, double bass—is highly unusual, although it is not clear whether this was motivated by whoever commissioned the work or whether this was Beethoven's choice. The form, however, is more traditional and clearly related to the *divertimenti* by Mozart, with six movements that alternate fast and slow tempos. As is often the case with Beethoven, this work is much more thematically unified than many of its precedents. The fast themes of the outer movements, for instance, are both based on a jump from B-flat to E-flat, with the first movement decorating the former note and the finale the latter. Careful listeners might discover also another link that would have been lost on the audience at the early performances, as the third movement shares its theme with the previously composed but at the time unpublished *Piano Sonata op. 49 no. 2*, which would not appear until 1805.

The first private performance of the *Septet* took place on 20 December 1799, and was described by one contemporary as 'the *non plus ultra*, as much for the performance as the composition.' In April 1800 the first public performance followed, as well as the announcement that the *Septet* would be dedicated to Empress Maria Theresia, which further cemented its status. At this time, there was an increasing demand for arrangements. Beethoven rather disliked this practice,

preferring to let others arrange his pieces and just providing the finishing touches—although often to great effect, as can be heard on vol. 2 of this series—but in this case he would make an exception for a very personal reason.

Since first composing the *Septet*, Beethoven's loss of hearing had become increasingly apparent, which led him to draft a letter now known as the Heiligenstadt Testament. In this document, which he carried around all his life, Beethoven despaired at his worsening condition. Furthermore, he expressed great trust that Dr. Johann Adam Schmidt, a medical doctor and professor, would be more in touch with the latest medical developments and thus could possibly cure his hearing loss. The fact that Schmidt was also a violinist may have further incentivised Beethoven not just to dedicate the arrangement to him, but to actually do the work himself, perhaps in an attempt to somehow improve his chances to get better.

But it was all for naught. After receiving the dedication in the first edition of the arrangement in 1805, Schmidt only lived four more years, without developing a cure, and Beethoven's hearing only worsened: clearly, the arrangement's magic had not worked. To make matters worse, during his later years the *Septet* was often held up as a high water mark, with one commentator describing it as 'much richer in true beauty than a lot of his later works, for instance the great *Sonata op. 106*.' It is therefore no surprise that several of his contemporaries report that during this time even mentioning the *Septet* in his presence would infuriate him. Not only had this piece undermined his more recent compositional achievements, it also reminded him of his misplaced trust in the dedicatee of the especially made arrangement for piano trio, Dr. Schmidt.

The appearance of the *Triple Concerto* on the final disc in this series might surprise some listeners, as it is the only work with orchestra, but this composition has more in common with chamber music than with concertos. It was also written in 1805, and much like the original *Septet* its instrumentation is highly exceptional if not unprecedented altogether, something that Beethoven was keen to point out to his publisher. The piece was dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz, and although it is widely believed that it was written to be played by Archduke Rudolph, the only source for this is the notoriously unreliable Anton Schindler. Having said that, the piano part is the lightest of the three solo parts—although rather uncomfortably written—and may indeed have been suitable for a developing pianist backed by two more mature string players.

The *Triple Concerto* was first performed in 1808, although it had already been published the previous year. In tone, it is rather a stark contrast from Beethoven's other concertos, which generally contain easily recognisable melodies and strikingly rhythmic material, neither of which are found to a great degree here. Furthermore, the opposition of soloist and orchestra, a central aspect of many solo works with orchestra written up until that point that was the engine behind much of the drama, is also absent, with the orchestra taking a largely subservient role to the three soloists. So although the work was called a '*Grand Concerto Concertant*' when it was published, it really has very little in common with other works with a similar title.

That has, however, not stopped it from being treated as a concerto, and judged accordingly. A review of the first performance compared it very unfavourably to Beethoven's other works for soloists and orchestra, stating that 'this concerto is,

in our opinion, the last of those published by Beethoven, and not just in terms of chronology.' Even in the twentieth century, many attempts to tackle this work as a concerto in which three soloists vie for supremacy have, in the words of one famous pianist involved in such a project, resulted in 'a dreadful recording.' Accordingly, this piece still stands as Beethoven's least popular contribution to the genre.

The question, however, is whether this piece is a concerto at all, or whether it could be more fruitfully played and judged as a different kind of experimental piece in a more collaborative genre. This disc takes the latter approach, and by contextualising it in a series of piano trios, it presents this work as Beethoven's most richly instrumented chamber music.

Marten Noorduin



The Van Baerle Trio was founded in 2004 by pianist Hannes Minnaar, violinist Maria Milstein and cellist Gideon den Herder. The trio takes its name from the street where it all started: Van Baerle Street, Amsterdam. The three musicians met there whilst studying at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, a stone's throw from the Concertgebouw, which they now consider their musical home.

The Van Baerle Trio was formed under the guidance of Dmitri Ferschtman and received lessons from Ferenc Rados and Claus-Christian Schuster, among others. Their encounter with Menahem Pressler in 2008 was a huge inspiration to the three musicians, who subsequently played for him on several occasions.

After winning the 2011 *Vriendenkrans Competition* in the Concertgebouw and performing there on numerous occasions since, the Van Baerle Trio was promoted by the Concertgebouw as *ECHO Rising Stars 2013/14*, a tour which took the trio to major venues across Europe, including Vienna's Musikverein, the London Barbican, Cité de la Musique in Paris, L'Auditori in Barcelona and the Philharmonie in Cologne. The Van Baerle Trio had already established its international reputation, after being awarded top prizes at the *ARD International Music Competition* in Munich in 2013 and the *Lyon International Chamber Music Competition* in 2011, as well as receiving the audience prize at both contests, and winning the *Kersjes Prize* in 2012, the highest chamber music award in the Netherlands.

The Van Baerle Trio's discography has featured a debut CD of works by Saint-Saëns, Loevendie and Ravel, which received an *Edison Award* in 2013. This was followed by an album dedicated to Mendelssohn's piano trios, including the world premiere

recording of the early version of his Piano Trio in D minor. Over recent seasons the trio's recordings of the complete piano trios of Beethoven have already won high praise internationally. The project culminated in a recording of the Triple Concerto with the Residentie Orkest The Hague conducted by Jan Willem de Vriend, released in the Beethoven anniversary year.

Maria Milstein plays a violin by Michel Angelo Bergonzi and Gideon den Herder plays a cello by Giuseppe dall'Aglio and a bow attributed to Dominique Peccatte, all kindly on loan from the *Dutch Musical Instruments Foundation*.

Eager to share their experience with the next generation of musicians, members of the trio have been teaching at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam since 2014.

The Residentie Orkest The Hague

The Residentie Orkest is the orchestra of, for and from The Hague. It has firm links with the city and its inhabitants. It also plays a strong role in supporting The Hague's wider profile as seat of government, home to the royal family and city of peace and justice as well as a centre of diplomacy, a first-rate place to live, a business hub and a city with a socially committed heart. The orchestra actively uses classical music to connect and stimulate all residents and visitors based on four pillars: symphonic, education, talent development and outreach. It aims to make a valuable contribution towards an inclusive, inspiring, collaborative and multi-faceted city.

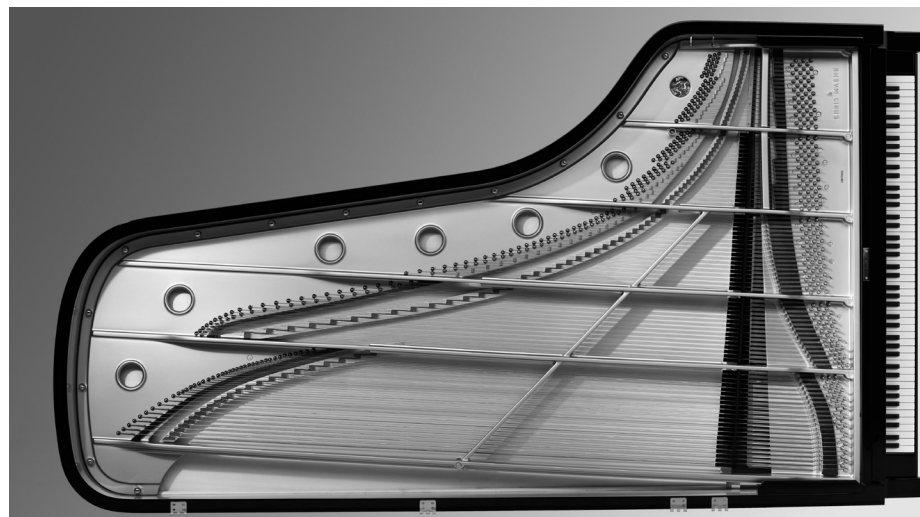
Since its first concert in 1904, the Residentie Orkest has developed into one of the most prominent symphony orchestras in the Netherlands. Nicholas Collon is currently chief conductor and artistic advisor of the Residentie Orkest. From summer 2021, Anja Bihlmaier will become the new chief conductor. Richard Egarr will remain principal guest conductor and Jun Märkl has been appointed as principal guest conductor as well. From 2015 till 2019 Jan Willem de Vriend was principal conductor of the Residentie Orkest.

Jan Willem de Vriend is principal guest conductor of the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya, Orchestre National de Lille and Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra. He is also Artist in Residence at the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra and makes regular guest appearances with such ensembles as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Rotterdam Philharmonic.

De Vriend first established an international reputation as artistic director of the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, which he established in 1982 and led from the violin until 2015. In the field of opera, de Vriend and Combattimento Consort Amsterdam gave performances, of works by Monteverdi, Haydn, Handel, Telemann, and J.S. Bach all in stagings by the director Eva Buchmann. Operas by such composers as Mozart, Verdi and Cherubini featured in his seasons with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, again directed by Eva Buchmann. De Vriend has also conducted opera in Amsterdam (Nederlandse Reisopera), Barcelona, Strasbourg, Luzern, Schwetzingen and Bergen.

In the Netherlands he has presented several television series, and in 2012 he received a prize from the national station NPO Radio 4 for his creative contribution to classical music.

This recording was made using a Chris Maene Concert Grand built in 2017. This remarkable instrument combines the knowledge and materials used in modern piano building with those found in older historical instruments. The most striking feature is that unlike in modern grand pianos, in which the strings in the bass and middle registers cross, in this instrument all strings run parallel to each other. As a result, it combines the solidity of a modern concert grand piano with the transparent sound ideal of older instruments. The sound of this symbiosis of old and new was a source of inspiration during the recording of Beethoven's Piano Trios.



With special thanks to: Piano's Maene, www.maene.be — Het Kersjesfonds



Het Kersjes Fonds

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Producer, engineer, editing & mastering: Bert van der Wolf

Recording assistant: Martijn van der Wolf

Piano Vol. 1-4: Chris Maene Straight Strung Concert Grand CM003

Piano Vol. 5: Chris Maene Straight Strung Concert Grand CM005

Piano technicians: Charles Rademaker, Naomi van Schoot

A&R Challenge Classics: Marcel Landman & Valentine Laout

Liner notes: Marten Noorduin

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