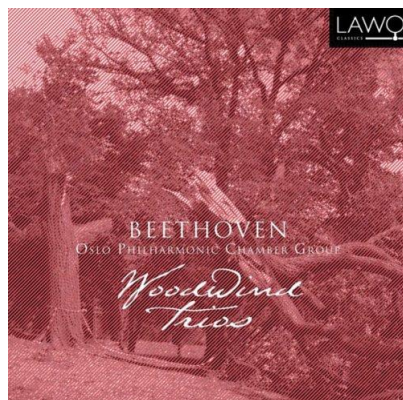


## SACD Review by [Jerry Dubins](#)

**BEETHOVEN** Trio in G for Flute, Bassoon, and Piano, WoO 37. Serenade in D for Flute, Violin, and Viola, op. 25. Piano Trio in B $\flat$ , op. 11, “Gassenhauer” • Oslo P Chamber Group • LAWQ 1034 (SACD: 69:28)



Woodwind Trios  
Audio CD  
LAWO Classics



Here is an absolute winner: a disc of early, lightweight Beethoven chamber works, superbly and charmingly performed by members of the Oslo Philharmonic.

Per Flemstrøm, Per Hannisdal, and Gonzalo Moreno open the program with one of Beethoven’s earliest surviving works, the Trio in G Major for Flute, Bassoon, and Piano, WoO 37, believed to have been written sometime around 1785 by the 15-year-old composer while still living under the family roof in Bonn. It’s fairly certain that the piece was composed for domestic use by the Westerholt household, whose daughter was receiving piano lessons from Beethoven, and whose father and son played bassoon and flute, respectively. The piano part is quite advanced, which tells us that both the young Beethoven and his pupil, Maria Anna, were already quite technically accomplished. Of particular interest is the last movement of this not insignificant work, a fairly sophisticated and well-worked-out theme and variations, which foretells of the importance variations would play in Beethoven’s later works. The piece is not without a number of prior recordings, but Flemstrøm, Hannisdal, and Moreno play with such verve and vivacity it’s hard to imagine a performance more delightful. Fairly early in his career, Beethoven ceased composing serenade and divertimento-type chamber works intended for domestic music-making by the amateurs among his wealthy, aristocratic patrons. Written in 1801, the Serenade in D Major for Flute, Violin, and Viola, op. 25, is the last of such pieces, though it’s not certain who the intended recipients were. The somewhat odd scoring—

flute, violin, and viola—which renders the piece a bit bass-shy, is almost sure evidence that Beethoven had a particular trio of players in mind; as an accomplished violist, perhaps he even wrote the viola part for himself. In any case, the piece conforms, more or less, to the six-movement layout of such works, though the composer substitutes a scherzo for the fifth movement in place of what would traditionally have been a second Menuetto.

The Serenade has enjoyed several more outings on record than has the WoO 37 Trio—some of which, like those by James Galway and friends on RCA and the Gaudier Ensemble on Hyperion, are truly excellent—but none surpasses the current performance by flutist Flemstrøm, violinist Elise Båtnes, and violist Henninge Landaas.

Most frequently recorded and best known of the three works on the disc is the Piano Trio, op. 11. One has a choice, however, as to the instrumentation in which one prefers to hear it. Composed in 1797, Beethoven originally scored the piece for clarinet, cello, and piano, but the Trio was published the following year with an optional violin transcription of the clarinet part to be used in the absence of a clarinet. The nickname by which the piece is known, “Gassenhauer,” derives from the last movement’s set of variations, which is based on an aria, “Pria ch’io l’impegno” from Joseph Weigl’s comic opera, *L’amor marinaro ossia Il corsaro*, a tune which became so popular that people were heard humming, whistling, and singing it in Vienna’s *Gassen* (lanes).

Many piano trio ensembles—i.e., violin, cello, and piano—include op. 11 in their surveys of Beethoven’s canon of standard piano trios, designating it No. 4, which results in the trios following it being bumped up in number by one: the “Ghost” becomes No. 5, op. 70/2 becomes No. 6, and the “Archduke” becomes No. 7. The work is performed here in its original scoring for clarinet, and, like its companions on the disc, it’s beautifully done. Leif Arne Pedersen’s clarinet is as sweet as honeyed nectar, and while Beethoven’s writing for the cello is not as technically challenging as it is in the op. 5 sonatas, which were composed for Jean-Pierre Duport, one of the great cello virtuosos of the age, cellist Bjørn Solum finds felicities of musical detail in the part that are often glossed over by other players. For clarinet versions of the trio, this performance easily matches in stature another recent favorite of mine by David Shifrin, David Finckel, and Wu Han.

Adding to the pleasure of the Oslo’s disc are the refinement and elegance of sound achieved by this Lawo SACD. Very strongly recommended. **Jerry**

**Dubins**

**This article originally appeared in Issue 37:3 (Jan/Feb 2014)  
of *Fanfare* Magazine.**