

Site review by [Polly Nomial](#) January 7, 2013

Performance: ★★★★★ Sonics (MC): ★★★★★

This enjoyable disc contains repertoire that is all new to SACD (if one can discount the Japanese re-release of the Beaux Arts Trio for Op. 11).

Opening with the Trio for Flute, Bassoon & Piano, we find Beethoven in his most genial, Classical mood with few (if any) pointers to remarkable musical journey he later undertook. Our protagonists here are Per Flemstrøm (flute), Per Hannisdal (bassoon) and Gonzalo Moreno (piano) - all are holders of the respective principal positions with the Oslo Philharmonic. As one would expect, the contributions are of a very high standard with flawless tone from both Flemstrøm and Hannisdal. Moreno's playing is also very sensitive to the (relatively meagre) timbre of his colleagues, so he never overwhelms their contributions; sadly he doesn't find as much inspiration in the passage work of the third movement as the preceding movements but at least some of that fault must be placed at Beethoven's door for it's hardly "Archduke" material.

Proceeding to the Serenade, Hannisdal and Moreno make way for their colleagues Elise Båtnes (violin) and Hanninge Båtnes Landaas (viola). Whilst the music is still light in character, there is no hiding the additional maturity audible in Beethoven's work. Flemstrøm and his colleagues clearly relish the additional challenge placed before them and make a winning case for listening to this work on repeated occasions. To conclude, Moreno returns with Bjørn Solum (Cello) and Leif Arne Pedersen (Clarinet) - again distinguished colleagues from the Oslo Philharmonic. As before, beautifully judged tempos are chosen together with a sensitive balance (arguably too sensitive from Moreno here). Overall, this disc is a thing of no little beauty which leads to the only thing that some will find contentious: the overtly non-HIP playing. Those who cannot abide vibrato-laden Beethoven should steer clear of these performances and there will surely be some who will expect far wider dynamic contrasts than offered here. If, though, one is happy with the stylistic offerings of the 1970's, this is a very safe purchase indeed.

The sound is wonderful - a rich, mellifluous patina emerges from the silence. If pushed, the slightly greater resonance of the Bragenes Church (Op. 25) is almost too much when compared to the Sofienberg Church (Op. 11 and WoO. 37). This is a recording in which the chamber music sounds very much as if being carried out in one's own home.

One word of warning though, this is the single worst designed set of disc printing, packaging & booklet from a colour perspective I have ever seen (including RBCD & LP). The back covers are hard to read because of the colour clash chosen and most of the photos/illustrations suffer a similar fate. Use dark glasses unless florescent pink is your favourite colour...

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