

# BEETHOVEN

## Piano Trios

### Nos. 5 'Ghost' and 6

Tichman • Bieler • Kliegel



# Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

## Piano Trios, Volume 1

Born in Bonn in 1770, Ludwig van Beethoven was the eldest son of a singer in the musical establishment of the Archbishop-Elector of Cologne and grandson of the Archbishop's former Kapellmeister, whose name he took. The household was not a happy one. Beethoven's father became increasingly inadequate both as a singer and as a father and husband, with his wife always ready to draw invidious comparisons between him and his own father. Beethoven, however, was trained as a musician, however erratically, and duly entered the service of the Archbishop, serving as an organist and as a string-player in the archiepiscopal orchestra. He was already winning some distinction in Bonn, when, in 1787, he was first sent to Vienna, to study with Mozart. The illness of his mother forced an early return from this venture and her subsequent death left him with responsibility for his younger brothers, in view of his father's domestic and professional failures. In 1792 Beethoven was sent once more to Vienna, now to study with Haydn, whom he had met in Bonn.

Beethoven's early career in Vienna was helped very considerably by the circumstances of his move there. The Archbishop was a son of the Empress Maria Theresa and there were introductions to leading members of society in the imperial capital. Here Beethoven was able to establish an early position for himself as a pianist of remarkable ability, coupled with a clear genius in the necessarily related arts of improvisation and composition. The onset of deafness at the turn of the century seemed an irony of Fate. It led Beethoven gradually away from a career as a virtuoso performer and into an area of composition where he was able to make remarkable changes and extensions of existing practice. Deafness tended to accentuate his eccentricities and paranoia, which became extreme as time went on. At the same time it allowed him to develop his gifts for counterpoint. He continued to revolutionise forms inherited from his predecessors, notably Haydn and Mozart, expanding these almost to bursting-point, and introducing innovation after

innovation as he grew older. He died in 1827, his death the occasion of public mourning in Vienna.

The first three piano trios, which form Beethoven's Opus 1, were published in 1795 and dedicated to Prince Carl Lichnowsky, who had welcomed the composer into his house in Vienna and offered continuing support. These were followed in 1808 by a set of two piano trios, dedicated to Countess Marie von Erdödy, in whose house Beethoven had taken up residence in that year. In 1809 he initiated a quarrel with the Countess over the matter of a servant, secretly bribed by her, it seemed, to stay with his master. Although Beethoven later wrote an apology, he moved to other lodgings. At the same time he attempted to change the dedication of these two *Opus 70 Piano Trios*, naming instead Archduke Rudolph, his royal pupil and patron, on the excuse that the latter had shown a particular fondness for the works, but the original dedication eventually stayed. Beethoven had played the works at a musical evening at Countess Erdödy's in December 1808, presumably with the violinist Schuppanzigh and the cellist Joseph Linke, and one listener, at least, described the works as of considerable force and originality, and remarked on the enthusiastic pleasure of the Countess and one of her friends at each beautiful, bold stroke.

The so-called *Ghost Trio*, the *Piano Trio in D major, Op. 70, No. 1*, opens with the instruments in unanimity with a short motif that is to return at the start of the central development of the first movement, followed by a gentler second subject. The concise exposition is followed by a more extended development and recapitulation. The popular nick-name of the Trio comes from the eerie second movement, music of remarkable originality and suspense, in the key of D minor and unfolding against the ghostliest of piano parts, although things do occasionally go bump in the night. The main theme of the movement appears among sketches for a projected opera on the subject of *Macbeth*, which allows speculation on its possible connection with events in that play. The piano breaks the tension at the

beginning of the final *Presto* in tripartite sonata form.

The second of the set, the *Piano Trio in E flat major, Op. 70, No. 2*, opens with a slow introduction, an unusual feature in this genre, the cello proposing a motif that is imitated by the violin and finally by the piano, until this touch of the academic, an element not always welcomed by contemporaries, is replaced by a piano cadenza. This ushers in an *Allegro ma non troppo*, where the principal theme is extended by antiphonal exchange between strings and keyboard. The second subject is introduced by an imitative passage based on the scale of G flat, recalling the slow introduction. A figure from the first subject opens the central development and later returns to start the final recapitulation, with its reminiscence of the slow introduction, quickly replaced by a livelier conclusion. The second movement, marked *Allegretto*, offers two themes, in C major and C minor respectively, and these are varied in alternation. The A flat major third movement, marked *Allegretto ma non troppo*, is in fact a dance movement with the equivalent of a contrasting trio section that uses violin double-stopping, suggesting the presence of a third string player. The finale, with a principal theme in marked rhythm, is unusual in the key of its second subject. The central development brings piano figuration that continues to provide an important element in what follows.

The *Variations in E flat major, Op. 44*, are thought by some to have been sketched in Bonn in 1792 and by others to be slightly later in date. They were first published in 1804. The *Andante* theme is given by all three players, in simple outline. The first of the fourteen variations allows the piano to elaborate the material, proceeding to a second variation for piano alone. The third variation offers rhythmic contrast in the violin triplets over a contrasting piano rhythm, and the fourth is entrusted primarily to the cello. The piano is given triplet rhythms in the fifth variation, while the sixth starts in unanimity. The seventh, marked *Largo* and in E flat minor, is opened by the cello, and the eighth, *Un poco adagio*, has violin and cello accompanying a singing piano melody with continuing triplets. This is followed by a more sharply defined ninth version of the theme and a capricious tenth. The eleventh variation allows the cello to introduce a characteristic rhythmic figure, over piano triplets, and the twelfth has an exchange between violin, cello and piano right hand over accompanying left-hand piano triplets. The E flat minor *Adagio* penultimate variation, with its sudden changes of dynamics, leads to a final *Allegro*, interrupted by a brief *Andante* interlude, before the rapid final *Presto*.

**Keith Anderson**

## **Xyrion Trio**

Widely acclaimed since its début in 2001, the Xyrion Trio, with the pianist Nina Tichman, violinist Ida Bieler and cellist Maria Kliegel, appears regularly in the major musical centres of the world and at international festivals. Recent highlights include cycles with the complete trios of Dvořák and Beethoven, with concert tours in Japan, New Zealand, Europe and North America.



## **Nina Tichman**

American-born, the pianist Nina Tichman has been based in Europe since winning the prestigious Busoni Competition, one of a number of other awards to her credit. She has appeared as soloist with orchestra and in recital in the major music centres of the world and has been featured in radio and television portraits on five continents. Her diverse activities as recitalist, chamber musician and teacher have led to invitations to perform and teach in many major international festivals, often featuring premières of works dedicated to her. Nina Tichman is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where she was awarded the Eduard-Steuermann-Prize for outstanding musical achievement. In 1993 she was appointed Professor of Piano at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne and she has led master classes at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, as well as at Amherst College and Princeton University.

## Ida Bieler

The American-born violinist Ida Bieler has received international recognition, winning first prizes and awards in major international competitions. A graduate of the Juilliard School in New York and the Music Academy of Cologne, she studied with Ruggiero Ricci and Oscar Shumsky in the United States, and Max Rostal and Nathan Milstein in Europe, and has been heard as soloist and chamber musician in leading music capitals throughout the world. She has recorded for radio and television throughout Europe, the Americas, Australasia, Japan, and Korea, appearing at important international festivals, and collaborating with fellow-musicians of the highest distinction. She boasts a repertoire of staggering range, and has given special attention to interpretations of complete-work cycles, including performances and recordings of the complete sonatas of Bartók, Hindemith, Schumann, Grieg, Brahms and Beethoven. One of the most versatile violinists of her generation, Ida Bieler served as concertmaster of the Gürzenich Orchestra-Cologne Philharmonic from 1983 to 1988. She enjoys a distinguished reputation as a teacher, since 1993 leading the violin master-class at the Robert Schumann Academy of Music in Düsseldorf. She has also led master-classes throughout the world, and is a member of the International Music Academy in Bonn and artistic director of the newly founded string festival Rheinische Streicherakademie. Since 1993 she has been a member of Germany's renowned Melos Quartet, and the Ensemble Villa Musica.

## Maria Kliegel

A native of Dillenburg in Germany, Maria Kliegel, one of the leading cello-virtuosi of our time, continued her studies with Janos Starker at Indiana University. Awards and prizes have included victory in the Rostropovich Competition in 1981, followed by a series of outstanding international concerts, with appearances in Basle, with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington and with the Orchestre National de France in Paris, directed by Mstislav Rostropovich. She has made a large number of recordings, including in 1990 Schnittke's *First Cello Concerto*, acknowledged by the composer as the definitive version. She appears regularly as a guest soloist at venues all over the world, and has an exceptionally wide repertoire, her versatility and interest in exploring newer works stimulating contemporary composers to write music for her. In 1998 she was appointed to the board of the influential Deutscher Musikrat (German Music Council), and in 1999 was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal State of North Rhine Westphalia. She has given master-classes at the Cologne Music Academy since 1986. Maria Kliegel's many recordings for Naxos include a wide spectrum of works for cello and orchestra, in addition to a range of works from recital repertoire. She plays the legendary "Ex-Gendron" cello made by Stradivarius in 1693 and placed at her disposal by the Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur in North Rhine Westphalia.

# Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

## Piano Trios, Volume 1

	<b>Piano Trio No. 5 in D major, Op. 70, No. 1 ‘Ghost Trio’</b>	<b>27:48</b>
1	Allegro vivace e con brio	9:56
2	Largo assai ed espressivo	10:03
3	Presto	7:49
	<b>Piano Trio No. 6 in E flat major, Op. 70, No. 2</b>	<b>30:06</b>
4	Poco sostenuto – Allegro ma non troppo	10:06
5	Allegretto	5:17
6	Allegretto ma non troppo	6:52
7	Finale: Allegro	7:51
	<b>Variations in E flat major, Op. 44</b>	<b>13:46</b>
8	Thema	0:48
9	Variation I	0:39
10	Variation II	0:48
11	Variation III	0:41
12	Variation IV	0:49
13	Variation V	0:34
14	Variation VI	0:35
15	Variation VII	1:12
16	Variation VIII	1:05
17	Variation IX	0:32
18	Variation X	0:34
19	Variation XI	0:41
20	Variation XII	0:40
21	Variation XIII	1:22
22	Variation XIV	2:47



DDD

8.557723

Playing Time  
71:43

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Composed during his 'middle period', Beethoven's two *Op. 70 Piano Trios* are typically dramatic works full of structural and thematic innovation. The striking *Ghost Trio*, so-called after its slow movement with its eerie and sombre tremolos in the lower register of the keyboard, is a work of extraordinary tension, unusually fragmented material and unstable harmonies. By contrast, *Piano Trio No. 6* is one of Beethoven's most subtle chamber works, mellow, lyrical and intimate in nature.

Ludwig van  
**BEETHOVEN**  
(1770–1827)

**Piano Trios • 1**

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|-------------|--|--------------|
| <b>1-3</b>  | <b>Piano Trio No. 5 in D major, Op. 70, No. 1 'Ghost Trio'</b> | <b>27:48</b> |
| <b>4-7</b>  | <b>Piano Trio No. 6 in E flat major, Op. 70, No. 2</b>         | <b>30:06</b> |
| <b>8-22</b> | <b>Variations in E flat major, Op. 44</b>                      | <b>13:49</b> |

**Xyrion Trio**

**Nina Tichman, Piano • Ida Bieler, Violin • Maria Kliegel, Cello**

Recorded in the Clara Wieck Auditorium, Sandhausen, Germany, from 20th to 22nd October, 2004

Producer and Engineer: Teije van Geest • Editors: Günter Appenheimer and Ralf Kolbinger

For a complete track list please see the booklet

Booklet Notes: Keith Anderson • Cover Picture: *Abbey in the Oakwood, 1810* by Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) (Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin, Germany / Bridgeman Art Library)