Beethoven - Chamber Music for Winds (2017)

01. Trio for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon C Major, Op. 87: I. Allegro 02. Trio for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon C Major, Op. 87: II. Adagio 03. Trio for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon C Major, Op. 87: III. Menuetto. Allegro molto 04. Trio for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon C Major, Op. 87: IV. Finale. Presto 05. Trio for Piano, Flute and Bassoon G major WoO 37: I. Allegro 06. Trio for Piano, Flute and Bassoon G major WoO 37: II. Adagio 07. Trio for Piano, Flute and Bassoon G major WoO 37: III. Thema andante con Variazioni 08. Variations in C Major on Mozart's "La ci darem la mano", WoO 28: Thema 09. Variations in C Major on Mozart's "La ci darem la mano", WoO 28: Variation 1 10. Variations in C Major on Mozart's "La ci darem la mano", WoO 28: Variation 2 11. Variations in C Major on Mozart's "La ci darem la mano", WoO 28: Variation 3 12. Beethoven: Variations in C Major on Mozart's "La ci darem la mano", WoO 28: Variation 4 13. Variations in C Major on Mozart's "La ci darem la mano", WoO 28: Variation 5 14. Variations in C Major on Mozart's "La ci darem la mano", WoO 28: Variation 6 15. Variations in C Major on Mozart's "La ci darem la mano", WoO 28: Variation 7 16. Variations in C Major on Mozart's "La ci darem la mano", WoO 28: Variation 8-Coda 17. Sonata for Piano and Horn in F Major, Op. 17: I. Allegro moderato 18. Sonata for Piano and Horn in F Major, Op. 17: II. Poco Adagio, quasi Andante 19. Sonata for Piano and Horn in F Major, Op. 17: III. Rondo. Allegro moderato 20. Duo for Clarinet and Bassoon B flat major WoO 27 No. 3: I. Allegro sostenuto! 21. Duo for Clarinet and Bassoon B flat major WoO 27 No. 3: II. Aria con variazioni. Andantino con moto Les Vents Francais: Emmanuel Pahud, flute Francois Leleux, oboe Paul Meyer, clarinet Gilbert Audin, bassoon Radovan Vlatković, horn Éric Le Sage, piano.

This extra helping of Beethoven's music for winds comes on the heels of Les Vents Français's recent triple-CD release Winds & Piano, praised by The Telegraph for "stylistically sure and interpretatively ear-catching" performances, including one of Beethoven's Op.16 Quintet, which earned the group added plaudits for "astutely balanced and finely observed" playing. This recording offers much more of a good thing, with Beethoven grouping the winds in a variety of smaller combinations. ---warnerclassics.com

This Warner Classics release is billed as music by Beethoven, but most of it fits only partly under that rubric. Les Vents Français experienced well-deserved success for their French-heavy programs on recordings and in concert, and it is understandable that they would like to branch out with Beethoven. But in so doing, they get into pretty obscure territory. The Trio in C major, Op. 87, despite its high opus number, is an early work, like all the other genuine pieces on the album, composed in 1795. Originally for two oboes and English horn, it is transcribed here for oboe, clarinet, and bassoon by John P. Newhill, who wrote a book on the basset-horn. The most interesting of the bunch is the Trio in G major for piano, flute, and bassoon, WoO 37, one of the not-abundant works by the teenage Beethoven in Bonn. With its sizable first movement, virtuoso piano part, and vigorous interchange among the instruments, it points toward the mature Beethoven more than the later, but essentially incidental, works on the rest of the album. The Variations on Là ci darem la mano, WoO 28, are also a transcription (by Fritz Stein), while the Duo in B flat for clarinet and bassoon, WoO 27, No. 3, is thought to be spurious and is full of infelicitous voice-leading, unlikely from the student of Albrechtsberger and Haydn. The Horn Sonata in F major, Op. 17, is genuine Beethoven, tossed off in a day, but intelligently written for the French horn. What keeps the miscellany afloat is the playing of Les Vents Français, which once again is surpassingly elegant, a model of Classical-style wind playing. They get a strong assist from Bavarian Radio engineers, working in the Bavarian Musikstudios in Munich. Recommended for Beethoven enthusiasts. ---James Manheim, AllMusic Review

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