Beethoven & Schubert - Piano Trios (1999)

1 Piano Trio in B flat major ('Archduke'), Op. 97: Allegro moderato 2 Piano Trio in B flat major ('Archduke'), Op. 97: Scherzo, Allegro 3 Piano Trio in B flat major ('Archduke'), Op. 97: Andante cantabile 4 Piano Trio in B flat major ('Archduke'), Op. 97: Allegro moderato 5 Piano Trio in B flat major, D. 898 (Op. 99): Allegro moderato 6 Piano Trio in B flat major, D. 898 (Op. 99): Andante un poco mosso 7 Piano Trio in B flat major, D. 898 (Op. 99): Scherzo & Trio, Allegro 8 Piano Trio in B flat major, D. 898 (Op. 99): Rondo, Allegro vivace Alfred Cortot - piano Jacques Thibaud - violin Pablo Casals – cello

More than 70 years have passed since the Cortot-Thibaud-Casals trio waxed the Schubert B flat and Beethoven Archduke trios. Both recordings were hailed as classics in the early days of electrical recording and have enjoyed numerous incarnations on LP and CD. Even if you already own these performances, you honestly haven't heard them until you experience these new restorations. The effect is not unlike washing your eyeglasses. All the surface snap, crackle, and swish has been tamed, but more room tone emerges along with long-buried, intermingling overtones from all three instruments. There's more tempo fluctuation than modern ears may be accustomed to, along with Thibaud's slippery portamentos. Yet these devices are channeled toward specific expressive ends. Mannered they may seem, but indulgent, never. And listeners used to Cortot's freewheeling approach to solo repertoire will be surprised at how much he behaves himself in a chamber music context. Write, petition, call, beg, cajole, do anything to induce EMI to bring out the remainder of this trio's recorded output in equally amazing transfers. ---Jed Distler

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