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Release Date: 2014-03-25

EDUARD FRANCK: PIANO TRIOS / SWISS PIANO TRIO

POSTED BY PAUL BALLYK ON JUN 24, 2014 IN ROMANTIC | 2 COMMENTS

RECOMMENDATION

OVERVIEW

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PURCHASE

Recommendation

This is the second disc from the Audite label of piano trios by the German composer and virtuoso pianist, Eduard Franck. Given the high quality of the music, it's surprising so little of it has previously been recorded. Of the three pieces on this program, there is one other version of the *Piano Trio Op. 22* on the Naxos label. The *Piano Trio Op. 53* and the *Piano Trio (1835)* are both appearing here as world premiere recordings.

Eduard Franck (1817-1893) was about a generation older than Johannes Brahms. He was an extraordinarily gifted pianist, in demand across Europe, but as a composer, was very little known. One reason for this was the exacting high standards to which Franck held himself for his work; most of his compositions were not published until shortly before his death.

Most scholars consider Franck's best work to be found among his chamber pieces. The list of compositions in this genre is quite extensive, including five violin sonatas, five piano trios, two piano quintets, a piano sextet, three string quartets, two string sextets, a string quintet and two cello sonatas. If you are not already listening, click the 'play' button on the video in the right sidebar to hear the concluding *Presto* of Franck's *Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello (1835)*, written when the composer was only eighteen years of age.

There is a rather understated beauty to this music, which is masterful in many respects - formally, melodically and for the composer's vibrant musical imagination. It is difficult to imagine any listener who enjoys Romantic chamber music not enjoying this, and if you do, you may want to seek out the earlier Audite release of Franck's piano trios (ADT 92567) containing the trios Opp. 11 and 58. The remarkable Swiss Piano Trio performs with the impeccable technique, sensitive musicality and homogeneity of sound and approach that set them among the finest such ensembles performing today.