

The Blakemore Tr: BEETHOVEN, RAVEL on BLUE GRIFFIN

Classical Reviews - Composers & Works

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BEETHOVEN Piano Trio in D, "Ghost." RAVEL Piano Trio in a • The Blakemore Tr • BLUE GRIFFIN 275 (51:50)

Had this not arrived on the heels of the Ibuki Trio's Claudio recording of the Ravel and Shostakovich piano trios—reviewed elsewhere in this issue—I'd have accorded this debut album from The Blakemore Trio an even more glowing review; but good as the Blakemore's players are in the Ravel, they don't put quite the personal stamp on the score that the Ibuki's players do.

The Blakemore Trio's members—Carolyn Heubl, violin; Felix Wang, cello; and Amy Dorfman, piano—came together in 2002 at Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music, and have been performing together to critical acclaim for over a decade now. As noted, however, this is their first recording venture.

If I can't seem to stop repeating the mantra of how blessed we are to be living in such a golden age of chamber music-making, it's because it's true. The confident stride and commanding authority with which The Blakemore Trio delivers the opening bars of the Beethoven are all you need to hear to know that another chamber ensemble has arrived to claim the limelight. Perfect intonation, articulation, and ensemble balance and blending are further enhanced by some of the most exquisitely subtle phrasing and nuanced dynamics I've heard in a performance of this work; and both the acoustic properties of the Blair School's Ingram Hall, where the recording was made in 2006, and their capture by Blue Griffin's recording engineer and producer, Jamey Lamar, are of phenomenal presence and clarity.

The Ravel is equally exquisite in terms of execution, but as alluded to above, The Blakemore Trio doesn't poke and prod at some of those secret places in the piece that the Ibuki Trio does. The Blakemore's *Assez vif* movement, for instance, though actually faster than the Ibuki's by about 20 seconds, doesn't sound as swift or quick-witted because it doesn't dance as lightly and lithely. Still, if I hadn't heard the Ibuki's version first, there's no question but that I'd have rated The Blakemore's account even more highly.

In any case, Ravel's trio is certainly a work worth having in a number of different performances, and for Beethoven's "Ghost" Trio, they don't come any better than this one. Very strongly recommended. **Jerry Dubins**