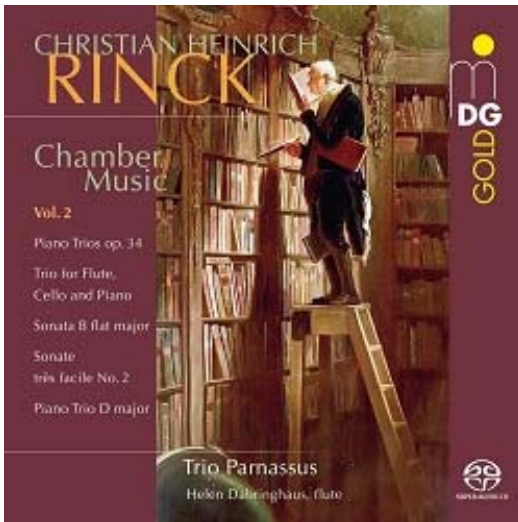


02/2021



Christian Heinrich RINCK (1770-1846)

Chamber Music Vol. 2

Piano Trio, Op 34 No 1 in C major (1815) [9:10]

Piano Trio, Op 34 No 2 in D major (1815) [10:02]

Piano Trio, Op 34 No 3 in G major (1815) [9:57]

Flute Trio [12:23]

Sonata for violin, cello and piano in B flat major [5:08]

Sonate très facile for violin and piano in G major (1797) [11:54]

Piano Trio in D major [14:55]

Trio Parnassus

rec. October 2019 Konzerthaus der Abtei Marienmünster, Germany

MDG 903 2188-6 SACD [73:20]

Last summer, I had the pleasure of [reviewing](#) the first volume of Chamber Music by Christian Heinrich Rinck on the MDG label. Up to that point, I was unfamiliar with the German composer, born in the same year as Beethoven, but did very much enjoy what I heard. My only issues at the time were with one or two anomalies with the CD brochure text, which I did flag up at the time.

I summed up by saying that, having really enjoyed the whole listening experience, I was very much looking forward to the next volume, which in fact is one of the label's new releases for 2021. Presentation-wise it's given over to piano trios, but does have an added bonus in that, for one work, the flute replaces the violin as the top part. For listeners wishing to find out more about Rinck and his music, I included a significant amount of information to this end, in my previous review, and which can easily be cross-referenced.

The CD opens with the Piano Trio Op 34 No 1, (1815), and just for a few moments – given the C major key, and extensive use of an *Alberti* bass in the piano part – you might be back listening to Mozart's Sonata in the same key, K 545, which probably every piano student has experienced at some stage of their tuition. Just as with Volume 1, the piano-trio genre seems to bring out the lighter side of the composer, again with no works in the minor key. I doubt whether it was by any way intentional, but the *Thema mit Variationen* just happens to use *Heil Dir im Siegerkranz* as its theme. This is better known to us as the English national anthem, and Rinck uses it once more in his Organ Variations from Op 55. Beethoven did the same for piano solo, and there is quite an uncanny resemblance between his work, and Rinck's, at the point where both composers write a variation in the minor key. Beethoven's work appeared in 1803, so perhaps you should arrive at your own conclusion, as to who might have copied whom?

Rinck reverts to the three-movement format for his next trio, Op 34 No 2 in D, which the CD booklet describes as 'much larger'. Once again I find myself somewhat at a loss to explain this in real terms. The two-movement Trio No 1 lasts 9'10, whereas the second trio takes 10'02, which admittedly makes it longer, and presumably 'larger', but by no means 'much larger'. The start of the *Allegro moderato* resembles its companion movement from the first trio, but the whole *tessitura* of the writing extends more into the middle register overall.

The second movement is a lovely little creation, albeit just less than two minutes long, marked *Adagio cantabile*. Once again I don't think that Trio Parnassus could possibly add anything to their totally empathetic performance whereas, at this juncture, the booklet appears to confuse 'cantabile' and 'dolce', in terms of which word actually has anything to do with 'singing'. But then when it comes to the *finale*, I really do find myself at total odds with what I'm actually reading in the booklet. On the face of it, it's a really catchy *Rondo*, where the piano-writing makes frequent use of 'crush notes', or *acciaccaturas* – something akin to dusting off the keyboard, and clipping the raised black notes in the process. It is often used for humorous effect, as here, but where it is incorrectly described as an 'appoggiatura' which any Grade 5 Theory candidate would be pleased to tell you is not the same animal.

In describing this *finale*, Ulrich Rasche really excels himself when he writes, 'In the third movement Rinck has a good deal of sh*t in his neck' – I have bleeped out the missing letter for reasons of decorum. Herr Rasche would unfortunately seem to have made the schoolboy error of literally attempting to translate a German idiom into a corresponding English one, but failed miserably on all accounts. Without wishing to labour the point any further, Rasche really wants to say something like, '(Rinck's) a real tease!' Even the French translation comes closer to the original German – *farceur*, or 'joker' – and Rasche does at least later mention 'the Joke of the movement'. For a final bit of light relief, I even ran it past Google Translate, to see whether this might have been the source of Rasche's seemingly crass translation, but even that came back with 'Rinck has fun on the back of his neck' – as you do.



The third trio in G is essentially more of the same, with a happy sense of Haydn running through the opening *Allegro*. The second movement, *Adagio cantabile* moves into the tonic minor (G minor), and evokes a more plaintive mood, which looks more towards Beethoven. There is a single-octave chromatic scale which leads straight into the closing *Rondo*, which then features at various points during the movement, sometimes truncated, or in its entirety. Apparently, the *Rondo* is blessed with a 'very playful *alla polacca* theme', though, to be perfectly honest, I didn't detect anything Polish about it in the slightest.

Flautist Helen Dabringhaus gives violinist Julia Galić a well-deserved break as the trio play Rinck's only flute trio (flute, cello, and piano) in D. The opening three-in-a-bar *Allegro* is a sheer delight, because it shows that Rinck has done his homework, as far as accommodating the change of instrumentation, with the switch from violin to flute coming off particularly well.

Dabringhaus's playing is ideally suited to the job in hand, where her impeccable articulation really comes into its own especially in shared passages in thirds or sixths with the piano. In terms of tone-production, hers is well-rounded, and essentially veers more to the gentler side of the dynamic spectrum, but nevertheless ideally suited to music of this period. An overall calm *Adagio cantabile* slow movement follows which does have one or two more dramatic moments along the way, along with the particularly catchy 6/8 *Rondo-Finale* that follows. Lovely, well-balanced playing and dynamic control here, with a special commend for both flautist and pianist. – Rinck clearly felt very much at home in this medium.

The single-movement Sonata in B flat dates from the first day of January 1818. As in Volume 1, Rinck uses 'Sonata' for 'Trio' on some occasions, without really implying a great deal of formal or thematic difference. There is, perhaps, a somewhat more romantic feel to the writing, and for once I find myself agreeing with Rasche's comment that it is perhaps Schubert, rather than Beethoven lurking in the wings here – the more frequent juxtaposition of major and minor tonalities here, being one small pointer.

Next, Trio Parnassus give cellist, Michael Groß, a short break, while violin and piano combine for Rinck's *Sonate très facile* in G major, which dates from 1797. As with Volume 1, the composer appears to be thinking more about the musical content, rather than the players' individual technique, when describing a work as 'very easy'. It opens with another of those bright and breezy *Allegros* where there is a good deal of interplay between the two instruments, especially where scale-playing is involved. The *Andante cantabile* slow movement is a charming little miniature, set in the subdominant key of C major, rather than in a related minor key, although Rinck often reverts to beginning new sections in a movement in the opposite tonality, as here at the halfway mark. Another catchy 6/8 *Rondo* rounds things off, and while early Mozart is close by, the *Finale* does, at times, give another nod in the direction of Schubert, particularly the *Finale* from his Violin Sonata in D, D384.

The CD ends with the most substantial work recorded, the Piano Trio in D major, which dates from 1804 and is the only piece that has an *Adagio* slow introduction to the opening movement. Essentially, it amounts to a minute or so of contrapuntal texture and melodic suspensions in the tonic minor key that look back towards the world of Bach. When the *Allegro molto* begins in the major key, the rhythm of the opening keyboard octaves, does, as the booklet suggests, a somewhat tenuous look-back to the *Finale* of Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* (1822), but, stylistically-speaking, that's about as far as it goes. Granted, Rinck's harmonic palette and overall approach to thematic development are somewhat more adventurous here, but not really significantly so to any real extent.

The *Adagio cantabile* slow movement is quite profoundly expressive, in a way that nods more in the direction of early Beethoven, than Mozart. For his *Finale*, Rinck eschews the more familiar 6/8 design, opting instead for a contrapuntal *perpetuum mobile* that is clearly more a product of the past than the future. Equally, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven do use similar *fugato* passages in some of their *Finales*, such as Mozart's Piano Sonata No 1 in C, K279. Either way, Rinck's example it's superbly-crafted, with each instrument now given a full and equal role in the proceedings. Trio Parnassus really come into their own here, with their tautly-articulate playing, perfect ensemble, and well-balanced dynamics – the ideal conclusion to a CD of such enjoyable and fresh-sounding music, which the Trio clearly enjoy playing, something which comes across so palpably to the listener.

The Detmold-based Musikproduktion Dabringhaus und Grimm (MDG) label was founded back in the 1970s by Messrs Dabringhaus and Grimm, but sadly Reimund Grimm passed away last August. Werner Dabringhaus has made it clear that their enterprisingly esoteric and highly-respected classical label will still carry on as before.

With Volume 1, I really enjoyed getting to know Rinck's delightful, if not world-shattering music, especially in the most capable hands of Trio Parnassus, and I'd say that Volume 2 has even more to commend it. If only the sometimes quite risible CD booklet mirrored the obvious care and attention to detail that has clearly been lavished on every other aspect of the production, then it would be very difficult to fault. It's really attractive music, beautifully played and recorded, and comes in SACD format – even the jewel-case exudes a quality of its own, is definitely built to last. Hopefully the issues MDG currently appear to face, in producing a commensurate CD booklet, will be prioritized in their New Year to-do list? But until that happens, a long-established and well-respected label is ultimately selling itself short.

Philip R Buttall