



Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Piano Trio, Op. 50

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[Fanfare](#) (Jerry Dubins - 1970.01.01)

This is only the second single-disc SACD version of Tchaikovsky's A-Minor Piano Trio I'm aware of. It's a shame, though, that nothing else was included to fill out the disc. Most other recordings of the work find room for one of Rachmaninoff's "Elegiac" trios or for Shostakovich's popular E-Minor Piano Trio, either of which makes a fitting companion for the Tchaikovsky and easily fits. There's no point, however, in bloviating on about this; let the market decide.

In Fanfare 34:6, I had high praise for the Swiss Piano Trio's Mendelssohn, proclaiming it to be some of the most captivating I'd ever heard. One issue later (35:1), Steven E. Ritter called the Swiss Piano Trio's Schumann "essential."

To its rapidly growing discography, the ensemble now adds Tchaikovsky's lone contribution to the piano trio literature and, based on this performance, it's tempting to regard the Swiss Piano Trio as the gold standard among today's active piano trios. It should be noted, however, that even gold is outclassed by platinum, and in this case I would have to say that as exceptional as the Swiss Piano Trio's Tchaikovsky is, it doesn't nudge from the top of the precious metals index the phenomenal performance by the young Italian ensemble billing itself the David Trio reviewed in 35:3. At the time that review was submitted, the David's Stradivarius disc was not yet listed by the major mail order sites, but it is now. If I could pick only one version of Tchaikovsky's trio to live with for the duration, the David's would be it. And it should be added that it's coupled with an equally outstanding performance of Shostakovich's famous E-Minor Piano Trio.

With the Swiss Piano Trio, you get the Tchaikovsky, and that's it, though it's definitely a performance throbbing with Russian pathos and passion that will not disappoint. If having the work in SACD outweighs the short playing time, the extra cost—\$19.99 vs. \$15.99 for the double-feature David CD—and the even more winning David performance, you won't go wrong with the Swiss Piano Trio's very fine effort. Recommended, but not with blaring bugles and rolling drums.